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TRAILL's

WORKS.

VOL. I.

CONTAINING

Thirteen SERMONS on the THRONE of GRACE, from Heb. iv. 16.——First printed in 1696.

A SERMON on the following Question, *By what means may Miniſters beſt win ſouls?* from 1 Tim. iv. 16.——First printed in 1683.

A VINDICATION of the Proteſtant doctrine concerning JUSTIFICATION, and of its preachers and profeſſors, from the unjuſt charge of ANTINOMIANISM.——First printed in 1692.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE REVERENDE

ROBERT TRAILL, A.M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN LONDON.

VOL. I.

Qui veritas comperta, sine Deo? Cui Deus cognitus, sine Christo? Cui Christus exploratus, sine Spiritu Sancto? TERTULLIAN.

GLASGOW:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM PATON,
FOR WILLIAM BROWNLIE, THE PUBLISHER,
WELL-MEADOW, PAISLEY.

1795.

BRITISH MUSEUM

An Account of the LIFE and CHARACTER of the AUTHOR.

MR. ROBERT TRAILL was deſcended of an ancient family, that had been in the poſſeſſion of the eſtate of Blebo in Fife, from the time of Walter Traill Archbiſhop of St. Andrew's *, who purchaſed, and gave it to his nephew. His great-grandfather, Andrew, was a younger brother of the family of Blebo; who, following the profeſſion of a ſoldier, roſe to the rank of a Colonel; and was for ſome time in the ſervice of the city of Bruges, and other towns in Flanders, in the war which that city, with the other confederate ſtates and cities of the Low Countries, carried on in defence of their liberties and privileges againſt the King of Spain. When he left their ſervice, his arrears amounted to 2700l. ſterling; for which ſum the city of Bruges, and the other towns concerned, granted bond; making their goods liable for the ſaid debt, in whatever country or ſtate they ſhould be found. After this he ſerved under the King of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV. of France, in the civil wars of that kingdom; and had occaſion to do that prince conſiderable ſervice in the taking of a town by ſtratagem. Upon his return to Britain, he was made a Gentleman of Prince Henry's privy chamber.

Our author's grandfather, James Traill, endeavoured to recover the ſum due to his father by the cities of Flanders; and, upon a petition to King James, which was referred to Sir Harry Martin, Judge of the Admiralty, he obtained warrant to arreſt a ſhip, belonging to the city of Bruges, at London; which he did accordingly. But the Duke of Buckingham being gained by the adverſe party, the ſhip was ſet free. Nor could he ever afterwards obtain any part of

* In the reign of Robert III. *anno* 1385. See Biſhop Spotiſwode's hiſtory of the Church of Scotland.

of the debt due to his father. By which means, together with the expence of profecution, he was fo far reduced, as to be obliged to difpofe of a fmall eftate he had in the pariſh of Deninno in Fife.

Robert Traill, the Son of James, and father of our author, was Miniſter firſt of Ely in Fife, and afterwards of the Gray-friars church in Edinburgh; and was much diſtinguiſhed for his fidelity and zeal in diſcharging the duties of his function. He married Jean Annan, of the family of Auchterailan, by whom he had three ſons and three daughters; William, who was Miniſter of Borthwick; Robert the author of theſe ſermons; James, a Lieutenant of the garriſon in Stirling caſtle; Helen, married to Mr. Thomas Paterſon a miniſter of Borthwick; Agnes, married to Sir James Stewart of Goodtrees, Lord Advocate of Scotland; and Margaret, married to James Scot of Briſto, Writer in Edinburgh.

Our author, Robert, was born at Ely in the month of May 1642. After the uſual preparatory courſe of grammatical education, he was ſent to the univerſity of Edinburgh; where he recommended himſelf to his ſeveral maſters, by his capacity, and diligent application to his ſtudies. Having determined to devote himſelf to the work of the miniſtry of the goſpel, he purſued the ſtudy of divinity with great vigour for ſome years; and after undergoing, with approbation, the ſeveral pieces of trial requiſite by the practice in Scotland, he was licenſed to preach the goſpel by a meeting of non-conformiſt miniſters, of the Preſbyterian perſuaſion, Epiſcopacy being at that time eſtabliſhed by law. His father, being then baniſhed, had taken refuge in Holland; and his family, which he left behind, in Scotland, was reduced to great ſtraits: ſo that our author had no ſettled reſidence. In 1666, he was obliged to lurk for ſome time, together with his mother and elder brother; becauſe ſome copies of a book, intitled, *An apologetic relation*, &c. which the privy council had ordered to be publicly burnt, were found in Mrs. Traill's houſe. At that time the Preſbyterians in Scotland were treated with great ſeverity; and the privy council, at the inſtigation of the biſhops, was continually harraſſing them by their tyrannical edicts, injoining conformity to the eſtabliſhed church, under civil pains and penalties, and enforcing their arbitrary and intolerating.

intolerating decrees, by the terror of military quarter and execution. These harsh and unjustifiable methods provoked many of that oppressed and unhappy people, naturally of a fervid temper, as the Scots in general are, especially where religion is concerned, and inflamed their spirits to that degree, that they took up arms in their despair, and advanced the length of Pentland hills, near Edinburgh; where they were totally defeated, and dispersed, in an engagement with the king's forces. Our author was suspected of having been among those that were in arms; and a proclamation was issued by the council for apprehending him; which obliged him to retire to Holland, to his father, where he arrived in the beginning of the year 1667. Here he was employed for some time in assisting Nethenus, Professor of Divinity in the university of Utrecht, in the publication of Rutherford's *Examen Arminianismi*. In his preface to that book, Nethenus speaks of our author in the following terms. *Attulit mihi manuscriptum autoris, doctus, pius, prudens, et industrius juvenus vir D. Robertus Toralius, patris cognominus ob Christi causam veritatisque confessionem exulis, haud degener filius, sacræ theologiæ et ministerii evangelici candidatus, mihi in procuranda et promovenda hujus libri editione, adjutor destinatus; qui et partes suas diligenter, fideliter, et constanter, ad finem usque obiit, dignus proinde laude et amore omnium, orthodoxæ veritatis, et clarissimi Rhetorfortis p. m. amatorum et cultorum.*

It appears from our author's preface to his sermons on *the throne of grace*, that he was ordained a minister of the gospel in 1669: but in what place he first exercised his ministry, we have no account. He was many years pastor to a Protestant dissenting congregation in London; in which station he laboured with great diligence, zeal, and success. Here it was that he published his *vindication of the Protestant doctrine of justification*, prompted thereto by his zeal for that distinguishing doctrine of the reformation; and his sermons on *the throne of grace*, and *the Lord's prayer*, at the earnest desire of many who heard them.

Our author had seen several vicissitudes in the fate of the civil and religious liberties of Great Britain. He had seen the monarchy and hierarchy overthrown, and risen again with greater power and splendor from their ruins; he had seen an overstrained prerogative give birth to liberty, and

and toleration take its riſe from a perſecuting ſpirit: he rejoiced in the proſpect of the continuance of the bleſſings of the revolution to Great Britain, by the ſettlement of the Proteſtant ſucceſſion in the illuſtrious houſe of Hanover: he ſaw that ſucceſſion take place. *And now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.* He died in the month of May 1716, aged ſeventy-four years.

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THE

PREFACE.

*WHAT is in this book offered to your reading, was, some years since, preached, in the ordinary course of my ministry, on a week-day, with no more thought (that is, none at all) of printing it, than I had of publishing this way any thing I have preached these seven and twenty years, wherein I have been exercised in the ministry of the word, save one single sermon extorted from me about fourteen years ago.**

The publishing of such plain discourses, is singly owing to the importunity of some of the hearers, and to the assisttance they gave me, by getting what I spake transcribed from two shorthand writers: without which I could not have published it: my own notes being only little scraps of heads of doctrine, and scriptures confirming them.

In the same way I had brought to me what I spoke from Heb. x. 23, 24. *and have it lying by me; which may also see the light, if the Lord will that I live†: and if this be accepted of such whose testimony I only value; I mean such as are sound in the faith, and exercised in the life of faith.*

I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ; of his divine person, (the image of the invisible God, Col. i. 15.); *of his divine office,* (the Mediator betwixt God and men, 1 Tim. ii. 5.); *of his divine righteousness, (he is* the Lord our Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6.; *which name is also called upon his church,* Jer. xxxiii. 16.); *and of his divine Spirit, (which all that are his receive,* Rom. viii. 9.) *I know no true ministers of Christ, but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ in his saving fulness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men; no true Christian, but one united to*

* This sermon is inserted in this volume, immediately after the sermons on *the throne of grace.*

† These sermons were published after the author's death. The book is intitled, *A stedfast adherence to the profession of our faith.*

Chriſt by faith, and abiding in him by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jeſus Chriſt, in the beauties of goſpel-holineſs. Miniſters and Chriſtians of this ſpirit, have for many years been my brethren and companions, and, I hope, ſhall ever be, whitherſoever the hand of God ſhall lead me.

Through the Lord's mercy to me, (as to many in London), I have often heard what is far more worthy of the preſs, than any thing I can publiſh. I have not been negligent in deſiring ſuch able miniſters of the new teſtament, to let their light ſhine this way; but have little prevailed. It may be this mean eſſay may provoke them more to that good work.

Whatever you may think of my way of managing this ſubject, (and indeed there is nothing in that, either as deſigned or expected by me, or that in itſelf deſerveth any great regard); yet the theme itſelf, all muſt judge, who have ſpiritual ſenſes, is of great importance, and always ſeaſonable. It is concerning the throne of God's ſaving grace, reared up in Jeſus Chriſt, and revealed unto men in the goſpel; with the application all ſhould make to that throne, the great bleſſings to be reaped by that application, and mens great need of thoſe bleſſings.

This greateſt of ſubjects is meanly, but honeſtly, handled in the ſame order in which it was preached, and moſtly in the ſame words. Some few paſſages out of hiſtory are inſerted, which were not ſpoken.

May the Lord of the harveſt, who miniſtered this ſeed to the ſower, make it bread to the eater, and accompany it with his bleſſing on ſome that are called to inherit a bleſſing; and I have my end and deſire; the reader ſhall have the benefit; and the Lord the glory; for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. AMEN.

LONDON, March 25, 1696. } ROBERT TRAILL.

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SERMONS

Aug. 9. 1812 11 5 35

SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

THRONE OF GRACE.

SERMON I.

HEBREWS iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.

THE main drift of the bleſſed apoſtle, the Holy Ghoſt's penman, in this excellent epiſtle, is to ſet forth the pre-eminence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, firſt, in his divine perſon, far above all angels, who are bid worſhip him, even when dwelling in man's nature. If the god-head of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be hid from the readers of this epiſtle, it muſt be a ſpecial power of the *god of this world on their unbelieving minds*, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Will blinded men forbear to call the Son *God* when the Father ſpeaks ſo? chap. i. 8. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Then the apoſtle ſpeaks of his incarnation, chap. ii. 11, *&c.* And therewith ſpeaks of his prieſthood, chapter iii. The apoſtle compares Chriſt with and prefers him above Moſes, chap. ii.; then above Aaron as a prieſt, chap. vii.; and compares

him with Melchizedec, an eminent type of Chriſt. By this epiſtle we may know what Paul's reaſonings with the Jews were, Acts ix. 22. and xvii. 2, 3. and what is the right way of dealing with the Jews at this day. Till Chriſt's divine perſon, and righteouſneſs, and prieſthood, have more room in the religion of the Gentiles, Chriſtianity is not like to leaven the Jews. This doctrine of Chriſt's prieſthood; and of the ſacrifice of himſelf he offered in that office, the apoſtle doth often intermix, with ſuitable exhortations from it; as in the context, ver. 14. *Seeing then that we have a great high prieſt*, (all the old teſtament high-prieſts were but types and ſhadows of him, and were but little high-prieſts), *that is paſſed into the heavens*, (no high-prieſt but Chriſt went farther than the holy of holies, for the people's advantage), *Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion.* The dignity of Chriſt in his advanced ſtate, as well as his grace in his humbled ſtate, lays Chriſtians under a ſtrong engagement to cleave to him with ſtedfaſt confidence. Yet for as great as this perſon is, and for all that he is in heaven, and in unſpeakable dignity and glory there, you muſt not think, that he in heaven, and we on earth, can have no communion: ver. 15. *For we have not an high-prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;* (Though now he hath none of his own, yet he can feel thoſe of his people, and his feeling engageth ſpeedy relief. The reaſon the apoſtle gives for this ſympathy of Chriſt with his people, is from Chriſt's experience when on earth); *but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.* The apoſtle delivers the mind of the Holy Ghoſt about Chriſt's ſympathy negatively, *We have not an high-prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities:* in which manner of expreſſion he reflects on the meaneſs of the Levitical prieſts, to whom it was impoſſible to know and feel all the infirmities of the people, for whom yet they appeared before God; and he implies the affirmative

tive ſtrongly, *We have an high-prieſt which can be* (and is) *touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* How a ſinleſs man, as Chriſt ever was, can be touched with the feeling of the infirmities of ſinners, and many of theſe infirmities ſinful ones; how a glorified man, as Chriſt now is, exalted to, and poſſeſſed of the higheſt glory and bliſs, can be, and is touched with the feeling of all the infirmities of all his people, is what the word plainly reveals to be believed; but it is not to be fully known till we come to heaven. But he is the head, and all his people are *his body, his members, of his fleſh, and of his bones*, Eph. v. 30. A marvelous word! Can the fleſh be torn, and the bones be broken, and the head not feel it? Though he be glorified above what we can conceive, he is a living, ſenſible, and compaſſionate head; and as nearly and cloſely united to all his members now, as when they *ſaw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and with their hands handled the word of life*, 1 John i. 1. There is nothing ails a poor believer in Chriſt, there is no groan riſeth from his diſtreſſed heart, but it is immediately felt at the tender heart of the Lord Jeſus, at the Father's right-hand. We would groan and ſing with the ſame breath, if we believed this firmly.

In my text, there is a moſt bleſſed exhortation, from this ſame ground of Chriſt's ſympathy in heaven, unto a bold approaching to the throne of grace. The nativeneſs and ſtrength of the inference, is obvious to the moſt ordinary attention. The exhortation is unto the improving of the greateſt privilege, an erected and revealed throne of grace; and that in the practice of the greateſt duty, believing approaching unto his throne, or unto God ſitting on this throne of grace.

What I would take up in, and handle, in ſpeaking to theſe words, ſhall be the reſolution of four weighty queſtions, which ſhould be in the hearts of all worſhippers of God.

1. The

1. The firſt great queſtion is, *Where may I find God?* This was Job's queſtion and wiſh: Job xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his ſeat!* And that this *ſeat* was a throne of grace to Job, is evident from ver. 6. This text tells you, God is on a *throne of grace:* a fit place for God to be ſought in, and where only he can be found graciouſly by a ſinner.

2. The ſecond queſtion is, *How ſhould we come to God on this throne? Let us come boldly*, ſaith the apoſtle. The original word ſignifieth, *coming freely; with free, open, bold ſpeaking, pouring out all our hearts and minds to him.* Let us come, without making uſe of ſaint or angel to introduce us to this throne. Any poor ſinner may come himſelf alone to this court, and that boldly, without fear of being repulſed.

3. The third queſtion is the hardeſt, *What ground hath a ſinner for this boldneſs?* The ground the apoſtle gives for it, is hinted in the word *therefore*, which relates to ver. 14, 15. becauſe of *Jeſus the Son of God, our great high-prieſt in heaven.* If we had not ſuch an high-prieſt, miniſtering in glory at the high altar above, no ſinner could come boldly to the throne of grace on earth. So he argues, chap. x. 19, 20, 21, 22.

4. The laſt queſtion is, *What ſhall we get, and for what may we come to this throne of grace?* The apoſtle ſpeaks fully to this in the text: Let us come, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Theſe precious things, *mercy* and *grace*, are ſcattered round this throne. Any poor needy creature ſhould come for a ſaving alms from this throne, and may have it for the coming.

Head I. The firſt of theſe I would begin with. *Where is God to be found?* The apoſtle tells us, on a *throne of grace.* The word is only here; no where elſe in the ſcriptures is the word to be found: but what is ſignified by it, is frequently in the old and new teſta-

teſtament, as we ſhall hear. But though the phraſe, *The throne of grace*, be only once named in this, Heb. iv. 16.; yet the thing ſignified is ſo precious, and the expreſſion of it ſo ſavoury, ſignificant, and ſuitable, that this form of ſpeaking, *The throne of grace*, is become famous, known, and uſed among Chriſtians, and will doubtleſs be till the end of time. As long as God hath a mind to give mercy and grace, as long as any of the children of men are ſenſibly needy of grace and mercy, and aſkers and receivers thereof from the Lord, (and that will be till the heavens be no more), this throne of grace will be plied and praiſed.

I would firſt conſider the proper meaning of this word, *a throne of grace*. It is obvious, that the apoſtle, in this epiſtle, doth every where (if I may uſe a much abuſed word) *chriſten* the old teſtament types, and gives them new teſtament names, and applies them, to the doctrine of Chriſt he is teaching the Chriſtian Jews he writes to. The old teſtament church knew what a high-prieſt was, what his inſtitution, office, and performance were in the tabernacle in the wilderneſs, and in the temple of Solomon in Canaan: but both Aaron and his ſucceſſors, and the tabernacle and temple, were but types and ſhadows of Jeſus Chriſt in his perſon and office. There was the holieſt of all, into which the high-prieſt went alone, and only once a-year; in this was the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-ſeat, and cherubims covering it: whence theſe common expreſſions in the old teſtament, of *God's dwelling between the cherubims*, and of believers *truſting in the ſhadow of his wings*. Now, the holieſt of all was their type of heaven; and the ark, cherubims, and mercy-ſeat, were all but *ſhadows* (as the apoſtle calls them, Heb. x. 1.) of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and of that grace with God, and acceſs to God, that he hath wrought out for men. More particularly, that moſt ſacred of all things in the Jewiſh old teſtament worſhip, that was called the *mercy-ſeat*, the apoſtle calls a *throne of grace*: thereby teaching us, that what-

whatever of divine grace was revealed and tendered to, or perceived and received by the faith of the old teſtament believers, in their right uſe of theſe ſacred old inſtitutions of God to his church, the ſame with great advantage, believers under the new teſtament have in Jeſus Chriſt, the body, antitype, and ſubſtance of them.

We find three moſt ſolemn things in the old teſtament, in which the mercy-ſeat (the type of the throne of grace in the new teſtament) was applied unto. 1. The moſt ſolemn approach was made unto God, in the high-prieſt's going in once a-year to the holieſt of all, where the mercy-ſeat was. This was made, not by the people in their own perſons; nor by any ordinary Levite, who were privileged with a greater nearneſs to God than the people, Numb. xvi. 9.; nor by any of the inferior prieſts of the houſe of Aaron, to which family the office of prieſthood was by divine appointment confined; nor by the high-prieſt himſelf, but only once a-year, at a determinate time, and which many appointed ceremonies of preparation and performance. Some tell us of a cuſtom in their worſhip, that muſic, by ſinging and inſtruments, was uſed by the people, to expreſs their joy and praiſe, when the high-prieſt returned ſafe out from that ſacred and awful place, the holy of holies. 2. The moſt ſolemn atonement for the ſins of Iſrael was made at the mercy-ſeat. This was done in that yearly entrance of the high-prieſt into the holieſt of all, Lev. xvi. 12, 13. eſpecially verſe 14. *And he* (Aaron the firſt of that order of prieſts) *ſhall take of the blood of the bullock, and ſprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-ſeat eaſtward: and before the mercy-ſeat ſhall he ſprinkle of the blood with his finger ſeven times.* Ver. 30. *On that day ſhall the prieſt make an atonement for you, to cleanſe you, that ye may be clean from all your ſins before the Lord.* 3. The moſt ſolemn anſwers were given by God to their high-prieſt, Exod. xxv. 17,—22. where we have the inſtitution of the mercy-ſeat, and

the

the form of it: *And there* (ſaith the Lord) *I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee;* and again, Exod. xxx. 6. What the old teſtament Urim and Thummim was, and what their Shechinah was, neither Jew now, nor Chriſtian know, though they gueſs; only that they were ſpecial manifeſtations of the grace, and favour, and mind of God, which expired with, and ſome of them, it is thought, before the end of that miniſtration. But all theſe three glories, and dignities, and advantages of their mercy-ſeat, are all to be found in Chriſt Jeſus; who repreſents his people before God, and preſents them to him; who hath made the perfect atonement for all his Iſrael; and who declares to his church all the ſaving will of God, which he heard and received of his Father.

The apoſtle here in this epiſtle, and in this text, would have all believers in Chriſt to know, that the new teſtament throne of grace is the ſame in ſubſtance with, and with great advantage above the old teſtament mercy-ſeat. See Heb. ix. 4,—7.

The truth I would ſpeak to is this:

Doct. *That God in the goſpel ſits on a throne of grace, and from it calls and invites ſinners to come unto him.*

Let us come to the throne of grace, certainly means, *Let us now come to God ſitting on a throne of grace;* let us take both direction and encouragement to come to God, becauſe he is on a throne of grace.

In handling of this point of doctrine, I would ſhew three things:

1. What this throne of grace is, and how diſtinguiſhed from other thrones of God ſpoke of in the word.

2. Why it is ſo called, *a throne*, and *a throne of grace.*

3. What coming to this throne is.

I. *What is this throne of grace, and how diſtinguiſhed from other thrones of God ſpoke of in the word?*

The other I would firſt name, to prevent miſtakes.

1. We find a throne of glory much ſpoke of: a throne of the eſſential, incomprehenſible glory of God. This no man can approach to. Of this the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Tim. vi. 16. *He dwelleth in light that no man can approach to, whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee.* Marvellous is this light. We find the more light there be in or about a perſon or thing, the more eaſily and clearly it is perceived: as the ſun is ſuch a glorious body, that though it be at a vaſt diſtance from the earth we dwell on, we yet can take it up with our eyes immediately. As ſoon as it ſhines, we can ſee it, becauſe of its light. It is its own light, and nothing elſe, that doth, or can diſcover it. If the ſun did withdraw its own light, all the eyes of men, and all the artificial fire and light men can make, would never help us to find it out. But ſuch is the majeſty of God, that he is *clothed with it*, Pſalm xciii. 1. Men are dazzled and confounded by a little ray of his glory: *With God is terrible majeſty*, Job. xxxvii. 22. This is not the throne we are called to come unto. They are but triflers in religion, that know not in their experience how overwhelming the views and thoughts of God's majeſty and glory are, when he is not ſeen as on a throne of grace. *I remembered God, and was troubled*, ſaith one ſaint, Pſal. lxxvii. 3. *I am troubled at his preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of him*, ſaith another, Job xxiii. 15. No wonder Manoah ſaid unto his wife, *We ſhall ſurely die, becauſe we have ſeen God*, Judg. xiii. 22. when a view of the heavenly glory of Jeſus Chriſt makes John, who was wont to lean on his boſom in his humbled ſtate, to *fall down at his feet as dead*, Rev. i. 17.

2. There is a throne of God's government of the world oft ſpoke of, Pſal. ix. 4, 7. On this throne God ſits, and rules all things at his pleaſure, and in infi-

infinite wiſdom. This throne is to be believingly regarded by us; but it is not the throne of grace that ſinners are called to come unto for grace and mercy.

3. There is a throne of God's juſtice ſpoken of. This is that throne David deprecates his being brought before, Pſal. cxliii. 2. *Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant: for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified.* If a man be wronged and oppreſſed by men ſtronger than he, he may appeal to this throne of juſtice, and expect redreſs. But if a man's buſineſs be with God, he ſhould be afraid of this throne of juſtice. Men are oft proud and vain in their thoughts, and before others: but if the Lord call them before this high court of juſtice, they will ſurely be caſt: Job ix. 2, 3. *How ſhould a man be juſt with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot anſwer him one of a thouſand.* When God ſits on a throne of juſtice, to judge men according to his law and their works, nothing but condemnation can juſtly be pronounced on ſinners. Whoever he be of ſinful Adam's ſeed that expecteth ſaving favour from God's throne of juſtice, will find himſelf wofully deceived.

4. We find the throne of the laſt judgment. Before this all muſt appear, 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 12. This is not the throne of grace in the text. No grace nor mercy is ſhown to any from this throne, but to them that have plied and ſped at the throne of grace before. When our Lord *comes, and ſits on the throne of his glory*, Matth. xxv. 31. no ſinner that hath deſpiſed his grace now, will find any quarter then, Luke xix. 27.

What then is this throne of grace? It is God in Chriſt dealing with men according to the grace of the goſpel. It is *God in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf, not imputing to them their treſpaſſes*, 2 Cor. v. 19. *It is Chriſt ſet forth by God to be a propitiation*, Rom. iii. 25. This is the true *mercy-ſeat*, or *throne of grace*, or *propitiation*, 1 John ii. 2. and iv. 10. This is the

new court or throne erected by God, and declared in the goſpel, to which ſinful man is invited to come.

II. *Why is it called* a throne, *and* a throne of grace?

Paſſing what is ſaid of the apoſtle's alluding to the mercy-ſeat in the tabernacle and temple of old.

1. It is called *a throne*, becauſe of the glory and majeſty of God manifeſted here. God's condeſcending to diſplay and diſpenſe his grace and mercy to ſinners, is no debaſing of God, but an advancing of his glory. When he gives grace, he acts royally, and as a King, with majeſty. Araunah's offering to David, is ſaid to be *like a king*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 23. He was no king, but a ſubject; but he had a free, noble heart. The Lord on this throne of grace, diſpenſeth all acts of grace with great majeſty, and as a King; but not as a King, Judge, and Ruler, but as a King, Benefactor, and Giver. This royalty of grace ſhines, 1. In the greatneſs of the gifts, grace, and mercy: vaſtly above all that the creation can give. 2. In the manner of giving; free, ſovereignly free. Grace and mercy is his own, and he doth with them as he will. When Moſes prays, Exod. xxxiii. 18. *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory*, we cannot conceive what was in his holy heavenly heart. He was now juſt come down from the mount the firſt time; he is going up again to ſpend other forty days there, in ſuch communion with God as never mere man enjoyed before or ſince out of heaven; he had prevailed with God for Iſrael, and hath a moſt gracious anſwer, ver. 17. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, I will do this thing alſo that thou haſt ſpoken: for thou haſt found grace in my ſight, and I know thee by name.* What means Moſes then by this prayer? ver. 18. Whatever he meant, the Lord's anſwer is much to be obſerved, ver. 19. *And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs* (or beauty) *paſs before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.* (What is in this name that hath ſo much

much of glory and goodneſs in it, as ſhould ſatisfy ſuch a mighty hungerer for more of God, as Moſes was?) *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I will ſhew mercy.* God's glory ſhines highly, in his being the ſovereign diſpoſer of his own grace and mercy; and happy is the believer that adores this glorious ſovereignty. Paul in Rom. ix. 15,—25, makes a deep improvement of it. Jer. xvii. 12. *A glorious high throne from the beginning, is the place of our ſanctuary.* See then that you, in all your pleadings for grace and mercy, remember that you are before a high ſtately throne. Approaches to God on the throne of grace, ſhould be managed with the deepeſt reverence and humility. So did the publican, when he came to it, Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful* (propitious) *to me a ſinner*, (or *me the ſinner*, the great ſingular ſinner. So the Greek runs, as Luke vii. 37, 39.) The deepeſt profoundeſt adoration of the glorious majeſty of God, is performed by a ſelf-condemned ſinner, pleading at this throne for the obtaining of the ſovereign free grace of God. *Laſtly*, It is called *a throne*, becauſe grace reigns and is enthroned here: Rom. v. 21. *Grace reigns through righteouſneſs unto eternal life, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Bleſſed reign! and bleſſed are all that are under the reign and dominion of the grace of God. Sin reigns through the unrighteouſneſs of the firſt Adam unto eternal death, if men be let alone, and if grace do not break this reign of ſin. And grace reigns thro' the righteouſneſs of the ſecond Adam unto eternal life. And nothing can dethrone grace; it will prevail, and reach its end, eternal life, in all it falls upon. O that captives to Satan, and ſlaves to ſin and the law, would long to be under the reign of this ſtately power, the grace of God! and that believers themſelves would give a more free and large ſubjection to it!

2. It is called *a throne of grace*,

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1ſt, Becauſe grace erected and reared it up: Pſal. lxxxix. 2. *Mercy ſhall be built up for ever.* Nothing but grace and mercy framed the throne of grace. I may allude to the Lord's ſtately words to Job, Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 6. ſpeaking of the firſt creation, (but this throne of grace was fixed before, as the King himſelf ſaith, Prov. viii. 23. *I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was), Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?*—and, *Who laid the corner-ſtone thereof?* No creature was on the council; it is a divine contrivance. But, now it is revealed, our faith, on the ground of this revelation, may and ſhould go back, and take a refreſhing view of this eternal contrivance. The Lord builds a houſe of mercy, that a company of ſinners may dwell in, with him, for ever. What laid the corner-ſtone of this throne, but grace? What brings in the inhabitants, preſerves them, and perfects them, but grace? For whom is it prepared, and by whom ſhall this houſe of mercy be poſſeſſed, and with whom ſhall it be filled, but with *veſſels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.* Rom. ix. 23.

2dly, It is called *a throne of grace*, becauſe grace hath here, and here only, a glorious diſplay and diſcovery. Till men get a ſight of God in Chriſt, they cannot tell what the grace of God is. Search heaven and earth, you can never get a view of God's grace, till ye come to this throne. You may ſee God's infinite power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs written in great characters, in the great volume of creation and providence; but till ye come to know God in Chriſt on this throne, you can never ſee that divine dainty, and ſaving bleſſing, the free grace of God; grace, as an everlaſting fountain in the heart of God, pouring down, ſtreaming forth eternal ſalvation on ruined unworthy ſinners. Men ſhould make a viſit to the throne of grace, if they had no other errand but to get a ſight of this precious thing, the grace of God. A right ſight of it is ſaving. Believers ſhould long to

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be in heaven, if they had no other errand, than to ſee the ſpring-head of that flood of grace that came down from heaven, to drag them out of hell, and to draw them up to heaven.

3*dly*, It is called *a throne of grace*, becauſe all the acts and ſentences paſſed at this new court, are all acts of grace. All the bleſſings given from this throne, are all of mere grace. Nothing is here but grace: John i. 17. *The law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* Was there no grace nor truth under the law? Yes, a great deal; but it all belonged to Jeſus Chriſt. There was grace under the law, but none but what related to Jeſus Chriſt. There was truth under the law, but only as Chriſt was pointed at; otherwiſe all were but vain and beggarly rudiments, and empty dark ſhadows. The Jews ſee nothing of Chriſt in the old teſtament, and therefore find neither the ſaving mercy nor ſaving truth of God in it. And it is much worſe with men (Chriſtians I cannot call them) that ſee as little of Chriſt in the new teſtament. Take the chain of ſalvation, and all the links of it, as the apoſtle names them, Rom. viii. 29, 30. and all of them are of grace. We are choſen by grace; we are given to Chriſt by grace; redeemed by him by grace; by grace we are juſtified through that redemption; by the ſame grace we are adopted; by the ſame grace we are ſaved, *by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*; and by grace we ſhall be glorified. And they that will not claim theſe bleſſings, and hold them by this tenor of free grace, I dare not ſay that they ſhall never have them; (for this grace can overcome its greateſt enemies), but I may ſay, that they have at preſent no part or portion in this matter; and when they come to partake of grace, and to *know the grace of God in truth*, as Col. i. 6. they will be of another mind, and count it the beſt tenor to hold all by, even by free grace: yea, after all the riches of grace poured forth on believers in this life, when they come to receive the

the crown of glory, they receive it as humbly, yea more than they did any former act of grace from this throne. The *overcomer by the blood of the Lamb*, will receive the crown from his glorious Redeemer, as humbly, and with owning it as a gift of grace, as much as ever he did receive a pardon in that blood, when his head was on the block, and the ax of law and juſtice lifted up to cut him off for his iniquity. There may be proud pleaders for (or rather preſumers and expecters of) the crown of glory, but no proud receivers of it. We muſt *look for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life*, Jude, ver. 21. Merit and worth are only for hell; and they have no room in heaven, nor in the way to it. Juſtice reigns in hell, and grace in heaven. So all will find that come to heaven; and ſo muſt they all know and believe that would be there. Sinners that are for merit, will find it ſadly in hell. Mens merit makes hell, and Chriſt's merit makes heaven, Rom. vi. 23.

4thly, It is called *a throne of grace*, becauſe the glory of grace is the laſt and higheſt end of the building of this throne, and of all the acts of grace diſpenſed at it, and from it. That proud monarch ſpoke vainly and wickedly, Dan. iv. 30. and was quickly by God puniſhed ſeverely for his ſin. If we may be allowed to allude to ſuch words, we may ſay of the throne of grace, *Is it not that high throne that God hath built for the houſe of his kingdom, by the might of his power, and for the honour of the majeſty of his grace?* Are any *choſen in Chriſt*, and *predeſtinated to the adoption of children by him?* It is *to the praiſe of the glory of his grace*, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. Do they *believe* by grace? It is *to the praiſe of his glory*, ver. 12. Are they *ſealed*, and at laſt poſſeſſed of heaven? That is *to the praiſe of his glory*, ver. 14. Are they *quickened* when *dead in ſin*, and advanced in and by Chriſt Jeſus? This is *to the praiſe of his grace*, Eph. ii. 4, 7. All the bleſſings in time and eternity that the heirs of grace enjoy, are all to the praiſe and glory of that grace

grace they ſpring from. We read in the word of none of the counſels of God before the creation of all things, but of his purpoſe of ſaving a company of poor ſinful men by Jeſus Chriſt; and of no other deſign in this purpoſe, but to magnify his grace in ſaving of them this way. So much of the ſignification of this word, *a throne of grace.*

III. *What it is to come unto this throne of grace?*

Though the proſecuting of the exhortation in this text will open up the nature of this coming more fully, yet I would ſpeak ſomewhat of it in this place.

1. This coming implies a ſtate of diſtance from this throne in them that are called to come. This is called *being far off*, Eph. ii. 13. And this ſtate all men by nature are in. Men are in God's eye and hand: *He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 27, 28.; as the pſalmiſt ſpeaks excellently in Pſalm cxxxix. of the nearneſs of men to God, and of his omnipreſence and omniſcience. But his gracious preſence, as on a throne of grace, is far from all men by nature, and they far from it. This preſence is far from man's knowledge; there is no knowing of it but by revelation; far from mens attainment; for *no man can come, unleſs he be drawn of God*, John vi. 44.: far from their experience, and far from their love; for they *are alienated from the life of God*, Eph. iv. 18. And *in his favour is life*, Pſal. xxx. 5. and in nothing elſe.

2. It is alſo implied in this call to come, that there is a gracious proviſion made and revealed by God for the removal and making up of his diſtance, and getting of a gracious nearneſs to God. This is in the conſtitution and revelation of this throne of grace.

3. That the improving of this proviſion is mens duty, and ſhould be their exerciſe, in order to poſſeſs and enjoy the privilege and advantage of this proviſion.

What then is this coming to the throne of grace?

1. It is in believing on Jesus Christ. This is the first approach to the throne of grace. He is the propitiation, and mercy-seat, and throne of grace, 1 John iv. 10. Believing on him, is *coming to him*, John vi. 35. It is *coming to the Father by him*, John xiv. 6. It is *believing on God by him*, 1 Pet. i. 21. It is *believing on him, and on him that sent him*, John xii. 44. Believing on Jesus Christ, is an employing of Christ in way of trust, as to all his fulness of grace, and our utter indigence thereof. Whatever a man do, whatever exercises of religion he be taken up in, he never comes to the throne of grace, till his heart and soul go forth towards Jesus Christ for righteousness and life. The first right step heavenward, is saving faith in Christ. Nothing savingly good can precede it, and all saving good follows it: for faith unites the man to Christ, and all the fruits of holiness and righteousness spring from the virtue of the vine Christ; with whom the believer hath first union by grace, and then communion of Christ's grace, by which he lives, and works, and grows.

1. Coming to this throne, is acted in all acts of gospel-worship, and in the use of all gospel ordinances. They all belong to the throne of grace, are the institutions of this throne, and appointed as means wherein we should approach to it; and which, when blessed by the appointer of them, do convey to us the blessings of this throne. Of them there are several. 1. Prayer. This is coming to the throne of grace, if rightly managed. Though *asking* is not expressed in this verse, yet it is strongly implied, both in the commanded *coming*, and in the expressed *obtaining of mercy*, and *finding of grace to help in time of need*. All that make a fashion of prayer do not come to the throne of grace; yet all that pray rightly, do come to it. And because this approaching to the throne of grace by and in prayer, is plainly hinted in the text, and is so commonly understood by Christians, I would have my eye principally upon it in handling this scripture.

ture. 2. There is the word read, preached, and meditated on, that is another principal means in which men ſhould approach to the throne of grace. In prayer we pour out our heart before this throne, and expreſs our deſires to him that ſitteth on it. In the word the King on this throne delivers his will and mind to us; and we ſhould come to hear it, and receive the law from his mouth. Cornelius expreſſed an excellent frame for this ordinance, Acts x. 33. *We are all here preſent before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* This word is *the word of his grace*, Acts xx. 32. It is the proclamation of his grace to men. 3. Praiſing of God, is a coming to the throne of grace. This is the ſacrifice we ſhould offer by our High Prieſt, Heb. xiii. 15. Who minds this as they ought? If we want, we aſk; and ſo we ſhould. But where is the Chriſtian that can ſay, Though I had nothing to aſk, I would yet go to the throne of grace, that I might praiſe him that ſits on it? 4. Receiving of the Lord's ſupper, is a coming to the throne of grace; to feaſt on the king of grace; to feed on that body broken for us, and that blood ſhed for us, that is given to us in the word for food to our ſouls, and is given to us by his command, in bread and wine at his table; that in eating and drinking of them, we may remember him, and ſhew forth his death till he come; glorying and avowing, and boaſting, that we have our ſalvation, and all our hopes of it, built and fixed on that man Jeſus Chriſt, that was rejected by the builders in his time, and hath had little better entertainment ſince, becauſe they knew him not.

Application. Is there a throne of grace; and doth God ſitting on it invite and call men to come to him, or to him on it? We are called to admire, adore, and praiſe the grace that ſhines in this conſtitution of God, and call to men. That perſon is ſadly out in his praiſes, (and ſuch are never right in their prayers), that doth not deeply admire, and heartily

praiſe for this mercy of a throne of grace. We account a man ill employed in prayer, that aſks many things of God, but forgets to aſk the one thing needful: Is he any better employed in praiſe, who gives thanks for many mercies, but neglects or forgets to praiſe for the greateſt of all mercies, the throne of grace? before which all prayer and praiſe muſt come, if accepted, and for which higheſt praiſes ſhould be given. In order to the raiſing of more ſenſe of this higheſt favour, that God now deals with us on a throne of grace, conſider,

1. The deep condeſcendence of grace that appears in this diſpenſation. There is a glorious and ſtately ſtooping in it. The Lord had reſolved in his own heart from eternity, to have the company of many of Adam's offspring for ever with him in heaven. He ſeeth them fallen into a deep pit, out of which they can never get out by themſelves. God and man by ſin at a vaſt diſtance. Sinners cannot remove it, nor make ſo much as one ſtep towards God. Saved they cannot be, unleſs the diſtance be removed; ſaved they muſt be, becauſe of his unalterable purpoſe. In this caſe, ſaith the Lord of mere grace, if men cannot aſcend up to me, I will deſcend down to them, and draw them up again to me. This condeſcendence of grace we ſhould admire and praiſe. When David had got a gracious meſſage and promiſe from God, (and Chriſt and the throne of grace was in it), 2 Sam. vii. he ſits down as a man amazed before the Lord, and moſt ſignificantly expreſſeth his admiration and praiſe, *Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my houſe? and is this the manner of man? and what can David ſay more?* And what can David ſay better? To be ſwallowed up of wonder, is the beſt and higheſt praiſing. Who can forbear wondering at grace, that conſiders duly whoſe grace it is, where it finds us, and whither it brings us? When Paul ſpeaks of it, (and it was his uſual theme), how ſweetly doth he diſcourſe of it? Eph. ii. 1. Where did this grace find

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him and the Epheſians? what was their caſe and qualification for grace? They were *dead in ſin, walking after the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, working powerfully in them as children of diſobedience;* they were *fulfilling the deſires and luſts of the fleſh, and of the mind;* they were *by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* Who can be lower, vilêr, and baſer, except they that are in hell itſelf? yet in this caſe and condition grace made its firſt viſit to them. All that this ſaving grace falls on, are loſt and undone ſinners, men at the very brink of hell. An elect child of God is worſt and moſt ſinful the moment preceding his converſion. Paul was at his worſt, Acts ix. when grace fell upon him. If there be nothing but the power of grace that can ſubdue the corruption of nature; if this corruption grow in its ſtrength, till that ſubduing power of grace be applied; and if there be no middle ſtate betwixt death and life, (and theſe have been reckoned goſpel-truths); how plain is it, that a ſinner is at his worſt when ſaving grace firſt comes upon him? 2. Whither did this grace bring Paul, and the Epheſians, and ſo all Chriſtians? Out of the grave of ſin, unto a new life, and up to *heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus*, ver. 4, 5, 6. O what a mighty arm hath the grace of God! It is nothing for grace to pull a man out of hell, and ſet him down in heaven. When ſhall this *arm of Jehovah be revealed?* When will periſhing ſinners long for a ſaving pull of the grace of God? 3. What is all this great work of grace for? ver. 7. *That in the ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindneſs towards us, through Chriſt Jeſus.* As if the apoſtle had ſaid, "You and "I cannot ſufficiently, in our time and age, admire "this kindneſs, grace, and riches of grace through "Chriſt Jeſus, that we have received: but as long as "this world laſts, and as long as there are receivers "of this ſame grace in future ages, (and that will be

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" as long as the world laſts; for the world laſts for " the ſake of the throne of grace, and for what God " hath to do on it, and to give from it), there will " be praiſers of this grace; for every generation " of receivers of this grace, owe praiſes for all the " grace beſtowed on all that have been before them. " And when this world is at an end, there is a bet- " ter world that ſhall ſucceed it, wherein better and " higher praiſes will be given for ever. There is no " other muſic, but the praiſes of free grace, in hea- " ven; and none ſhall ſing its praiſes there, but the " happy receivers of it here."

2. Conſider the infinite wiſdom of this contrivance of a throne of grace for ſinners. The Lord wiſely conſulted poor man's caſe, his ſinfulneſs, his miſery, and his infirmity. No where elſe can God and ſinners meet in peace, but at this throne of grace. Grace *abounds in all wiſdom and prudence*, Eph. i. 8. Here is *the manifold wiſdom of God*, Epheſians i. 8. *Yet not* according to the ſorry rules of *the wiſdom of this world, nor of the princes* (or great, leading men) *of this world, that come to nought: but the wiſdom of God in a myſtery, even the hidden wiſdom (hid to them that are loſt*, 2 Cor. iv. 3.) *which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8. God and holy angels may meet in peace, whenever he is pleaſed to manifeſt his glory to them; though they be ſenſible of their meanneſs as creatures, and deeply humble before his majeſty. But where God and angels meet comfortably, God and ſinners cannot meet comfortably. That light and manifeſtation of divine glory that makes a holy angel happy, would confound and deſtroy a ſinful man, Iſa. vi. 1,—5. The ſeraphims adore humbly and praiſe; Iſaiah a ſinner ſinks; he is terrified with the ſight, and with the ſong. And yet this was a ſight of Chriſt, John xii. 41.; but his divine majeſty and holineſs as God

God was then repreſented to him, which terrified the prophet. But when ſin is forgiven by an act of grace, ver. 6, 7. then, upon the Lord's ſaying, *Whom ſhall I ſend, and who will go for us?* Iſaiah anſwered, *Here am I, ſend me*, ver. 8. Now I have taſted the grace of my Lord, I will run his errands; let him ſend me where and on what he pleaſeth.

3. Conſider how coſtly the erecting of this throne of grace was. It was a dear building. The throne of God's eſſential glory is in his own ſuper-excellent being, and falls under no acts of the divine will. When he had a mind to rear up a throne of glory to his name, in creating a world, there was no more needful but his word of power, his almighty *Fiat, Let it be;* and all things ſprung up out of nothing, in marvellous order, and beauty, and goodneſs. But when a throne of grace is to be erected for ſinners, there is more to be done. Here God's own Son muſt be made man; in that nature muſt be charged with their ſins; and muſt diſcharge that debt, by bearing the wrath of God, and curſe of the law, even unto death. Rom. iii. 25. the apoſtle gives us a deſcription of the throne of grace: *God hath ſet forth Chriſt to be a propitiation*, a mercy-ſeat, a throne of grace. But his blood went for it: law and juſtice exacted it, and Chriſt paid it. On this comes forth the bleſſed proclamation of grace, "Whoever he be of loſt mankind that will come to this throne of grace by faith, and will receive his juſtification in and by this blood, and will truſt to it only, ſhall never come into condemnation." This Paul preached, Acts xiii. 38, 39. What is this grace revealed for? Rom. iii. 26. *To declare at this time God's righteouſneſs; that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus.* We all know that God is juſt, and the condemner of tranſgreſſors of his holy law: but how the goſpel is framed ſo as that God's juſtice may appear in juſtifying of a believing ſinner, is far deeper, and more hardly

hardly known and believed. But take in but theſe three things, and it will appear.

1*ſt*, God was juſt, and the puniſher of the ſins of the elect laid on Jeſus. God's ſending of his Son, and laying of the ſins of his people on him, was an act of amazing grace and mercy. But the exacting the debt of ſin of him, when the Father laid it on, and the Son took it on him, was of juſtice, and ſtrict glorious juſtice. Never did juſtice ſhine ſo in its glory and purity, as in bruiſing the Son of God for the ſins that were laid on him. The ſending of millions to hell for their ſins, (and all muſt go thither that have them to anſwer for, (and all ſuch have them all to anſwer for, who offer to pay their debt with their own coin), and have no intereſt in Chriſt's undertaking), is a diſplay of divine juſtice, that men may grumble at, but cannot hinder. The praiſe of ſpotleſs juſtice will riſe up to eternity by the torments of the damned. But he that is ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, can far leſs conceive the glory of juſtice in bruiſing a ſinleſs man, who was alſo *in the form of God and counted it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6, (though ſome in our days think it blaſphemy to ſay ſo), a perſon beloved of the Father above all creature-thought; and that for the ſins of others, and they alſo the beloved of the Father in his eternal purpoſe.

2*dly*, God is juſt in not exacting the ſame debt of ſin twice; both of his Son, and of his people, in whoſe ſtead he paid it.

3*dly*, God is juſt in diſcharging of his Son, from whom he hath received the full and covenanted ſatisfaction for ſin; and he is juſt in diſcharging them for whom this ſatisfaction was given. He is juſt in *raiſing Chriſt from the dead*; and *he roſe for our juſtification*, Rom. iv. 25, 26. We are *juſtified freely by his grace*; but this free, free grace flows to us through the channel of *redemption by the blood of Chriſt*. And both this grace and this blood is ſet forth in the goſpel to

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our faith; and muſt be applied unto by faith, and applied to us in believing. Whatever the thoughts of men be of theſe things, free grace and dear blood are the ſtay of all the redeemed on earth, and the everlaſting ſong of all the glorified in heaven.

4. and *laſtly.* To raiſe your thoughts of the greatneſs of this favour, of having a throne of grace to come to, conſider what rich proviſions are made at this throne for ſinners. This the text ſpeaks of, and we ſhall in order handle them. We ſhall only now ſay a few words. There is no court in all God's dominions that a ſinner can come to, and find any mercy or grace, but only at this throne of grace. If you talk of law, or juſtice, or equity, theſe are all frightful courts to ſenſible ſinners. They know their cauſe and caſe is bad; and that if they come to any bar but that of the throne of grace, they muſt be caſt. But at this throne of grace, they that have nothing, may get all things; they that deſerve nothing, may get every thing; they that deſerve wrath, may obtain mercy; they that are caſt and condemned at the court of juſtice, may be acquitted and freed from all ſentences, and be adjudged to eternal life, by the grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus. All that is needful to ſalvation, is diſpenſed at this throne. Yet all that is given, is old in the purpoſe of grace from eternity, old in the everlaſting covenant, old in the purchaſe of Jeſus Chriſt; only it is newly given according to the ſinner's neceſſity: 2 Tim. i. 9. *Who hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy calling,* (this was done as yeſterday; but how came we by this ſaving and this calling?), *not according to our works, but according to his own purpoſe and grace,* (Paul ſtill oppoſeth works to grace, and grace to works, in the matter of juſtification and ſalvation; and ſo doth his Lord and Maſter that taught him, and ſo do all that know either grace or works rightly), *which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus, before the world began.* Let this be ſtill kept in mind, that whatever you can need, there is a ſuit-

able and abundant ſupply to be had at this throne of grace.

I ſhall conclude this exerciſe, with naming two ſorts of people that will be ſpecially welcome to the throne of grace.

1. They that come to the throne of grace ſoon and early; I mean, young people, children that begin betimes to be courtiers and attendants at this throne: Prov. viii. 17. *I love them that love me; and thoſe that ſeek me early, ſhall find me*, ſaith the King on this throne of grace. O that young people would try and uſe this throne of grace betimes! They would find Chriſt very gracious to them. He would diſcover his beauty, and give them of his love, that would cool their thirſt after ſinful pleaſures. They might grow rich and ſtrong in grace, before they be old; or if they die young, they ſhould be tranſplanted to a better ſoil, and be nearer the Sun of Righteouſneſs, than they can be in this world. Never did a ſaint get ſafe aſhore in heaven bewail his arriving there too ſoon.

2. They that come to the throne of grace to get, and not to give. Take heed to your ſpirits in this matter. When you come to the throne of grace, come to receive out of Chriſt's fulneſs, and come not to bring grace with you to add to Chriſt's ſtore. He loves to give, and glories in giving; but he ſcorns to receive grace from you; and in truth you have none but what he gives. Bring your wants to him to ſupply, but bring not your fulneſs to brag of. Spread your ſins before this throne with ſhame and ſorrow, and plead for a gracious pardon; but take heed you bring not your ſorrow, tears, and repentance, nay, nor your faith itſelf, as a plea for that pardon. How abominable is it to Chriſtians' ears, and how much more unto Chriſt's, to hear a man plead thus for pardon: "Here is my repentance; where is thy par-"don? Here is my faith; where is thy juſtification?" I know men abhor to ſay ſo. But take good heed, leſt any thought bordering on it enter into thy heart.

Faith

Faith is the tongue that begs pardon? faith is the hand that receives it, it is the eye that ſeeth it; but it is no price to buy it. Faith uſeth the goſpel-plea for pardon; but itſelf, neither in habit nor act, is the plea itſelf. That is only Chriſt's blood. Chriſt's blood goes for the remiſſion of your ſins, if ever they be forgiven: and is the only plea to be heard at the throne of grace. There are too many like the Phariſee, Luke xviii. 11. It would ſeem by Chriſt's words verſe 14. that both came for juſtification. *The Phariſee ſtood, and prayed thus with himſelf; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,——or as this publican.* Poor wretch! The publican was a far better man than he, as Chriſt teſtifieth. He came to the throne of grace, like a man that would carry ſomething away. It is a rule of this court, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things,* but *the rich he hath ſent empty away.* According to this rule, the Lord dealt with the Phariſee and the publican; and ſo will he deal with you, as you are like the one or the other, in your approaches to, and pleadings at the throne of grace.

SERMON II.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

On a former of this I made [illegible] text

I DID take up this exhortation, as containing an anſwer to four conſiderable queſtions that uſually are in the hearts of them that draw near to God ſeriouſly. 1. *Where may we find him?* On *a throne of*

grace. Seek him no where elſe; for no where elſe is he to be graciouſly found. 2. *How ſhall we come to this throne? Boldly*, with confidence. 3. *What is the ground of this boldneſs?* It had need be a great and ſolid ground on which a ſinner may build boldneſs in his approaching to God. This ground is hinted by the apoſtle in the word *therefore*. Wherefore? Becauſe of *our great High Prieſt, the Son of God, in heaven*, ver. 14, 15. Though there be nothing more commonly ſaid and owned, than that all men are ſinners, and that all the acceptance of a ſinner with God is through Jeſus Chriſt; yet I can aſſure you, that when a perſon ſees and knows what it is to be a ſinner, and know what God is, it is a wonderful difficulty to believe, that it is poſſible that ſuch a ſinner and ſuch a God ſhould ever meet in peace. People's dry notions and opinions of Jeſus Chriſt, if there be no more, will ſoon be blown away, with a deep ſight of the ſinfulneſs of ſin, and of the majeſty of God provoked thereby. 4. The laſt queſtion is, *What ſhall we get by coming? and what ſhould we come for?* The greateſt bleſſings; *mercy* and *grace*. Theſe bleſſings are comprehenſive of all things needful to make a ſinner happy.

To the firſt of theſe I began to ſpeak laſt day, *That God hath erected a throne of grace in the goſpel, to which men are invited to come.* What this throne of grace is, is to ſpeak to; and that this throne of grace is to be diſtinguiſhed from all other thrones of God ſpoken of in the word. The throne of his eſſential glory is unapproachable by all creatures. The throne of his juſtice is dreadful to all ſinners. We ſhould pray againſt our coming before this throne, Pſalm cxliii. 2. He muſt be a proud ignorant fool that would offer to come and plead at its bar; for here all acts and ſentences paſs according to ſtrict law and juſtice; and the law is an everlaſting condemner of all ſinners. There is alſo the throne of the Judge at the laſt day. But this throne is not yet ſet, though it will ſurely be; and

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we know not how ſoon, and ſhould prepare for our appearing before it, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

But this throne of grace is the gracious manifeſtation of *God in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf*, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is *the light of the glory of God's grace ſhining in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And to coming to this throne of grace, and to God in Chriſt diſpenſing his grace from it, we are here exhorted and encouraged.

In purſuing of this exhortation, I would,

1. Prove that all ſhould come.
2. Show who will come.
3. And who ſhall be ſpecially welcome.

I. That all ought to come to the throne of grace. All ſinners that hear of it, ſhould improve this great privilege, and ſeek the enjoyment of God's grace and mercy in Jeſus Chriſt.

1. Becauſe God is not otherwiſe approachable by men in accepted worſhip. *No man cometh unto the Father but by me*; ſaith Chriſt, John xiv. 6. The light of nature teacheth all men in ſome meaſure, that there is a God, and ſomewhat of *his eternal power and godhead*, Rom. i. 20.; and that this God ſhould be worſhipped. Therefore ſome ſort of worſhip is performed by all ſort of heathens, who are yet *without God*, and that becauſe *without Chriſt*, and therefore *without hope in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. Never was there, nor will there be, nor can there be, any gracious approach unto God, nor any addreſs received favourably by God, but at this throne of grace. Therefore whatever may be ſaid of the zealous devotion, and of the moral principles and practices of the heathens, yet never any of them did, nor could offer up an acceptable prayer unto God, nor obtain a gracious anſwer from him; not only becauſe they worſhipped an unknown God, Acts xvii. 23. Gal. iv. 8. but mainly becauſe they worſhipped not at this throne of grace; for there can be no communion with God, there can be nothing graciouſly given by God to men, nothing

nothing done by men that can be accepted of God, but at this throne of grace.

2. All ſhould come to this throne, becauſe all men have need of the bleſſings diſpenſed at this throne of grace. Where there is an univerſal urgent neceſſity, and only one place of ſupply diſcovered, men are called to betake themſelves thither. The bleſſings diſpenſed at the throne of grace, are equally needed by all. Every man, every woman, young or old, rich or poor, are equally needy, becauſe all are unſpeakably needy of the mercy and grace of God. Some indeed have a greater ſight and ſenſe of their wants than others, (and that is mercy); but the real neceſſity is common to all. Every unpardoned man needs a pardon at this throne of grace; but few, if any, value a pardon till they get it, or value the grace of God till they feel it. Do you feel your need of what is given and got at this throne? Come then. The law thunders and roars againſt you, that you may ſee your need of coming hither, for what the law cannot give, nor hinder you from receiving, nor rob you of when received. Do you think in your heart, that you are the moſt needy perſon in all the world; that you need all the grace and mercy, or more, than ever any ſinner received? Then come the rather, come the ſooner. The needieſt ſoul, the hungrieſt ſinner, the perſon moſt greedy of the grace of God, ſhould come firſt to Chriſt's door, and beg loudeſt. Is there any not needy! Alas! many think ſo, but none is ſo. Will you come for hunger and want? A ſenſible hunger, a ſenſe and ſight of need, an appetite after grace and mercy, is an alms that Chriſt can give; and many profeſſors want it ſadly.

3. The command is univerſal, to all that hear it. As the apoſtle ſaith, Rom. iii. 19. *Theſe things ſaith the law to them that are under the law;* ſo I may ſay, This ſaith the goſpel to all under the ſound of it, *Come to the throne of grace.* It is no indifferent thing. God commands all men to come. Believing (that is, coming)

coming) is commanded, 1 John iii. 23. Are you afraid to come? *Have not I commanded you?* Josh. i. 9. as God spake to the captain of Israel. Will men own God's authority in the law, and deny it in the gospel? Is he not the same God in both? He that commands you to have no other gods besides him, doth command you to believe on his Son Jesus, who is *the true God, and eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. If coming to the throne of grace were not commanded, not coming to it were no sin; and who dare say so? Not believing on Jesus Christ is the great gospel-sin, because believing on him is the great gospel-duty and work, John vi. 29.

Object. But I am afraid he commands not me; others he may command, but not such a vile dead creature as I am.

Anſ. Are you worse than some he hath commanded? Jer. iii. 1, 4, 5. *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me saith the Lord.* Such a practice in your land would greatly defile it, saith the Lord; but such acts of grace become the throne of grace. Are you worse than *poor*, and *blind*, and *miserable*, and *wretched*, and *naked*? Yet the king of this throne commands them to come to him, though he sweetly calls it *counsel*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. And in it we may join his two names, *Wonderful, Counsellor*, Isa. ix. 7.

Object. 2. But Christ calls and invites them that are *weary and heavy laden*, Matth. xi. 28. and the *thirsty*, Isa. lv. 1. and I am not such; and therefore he commands not me to come.

Anſ. 1. Do you expect any grace but at this throne of grace? Think you to work it out in yourselves, and come to him for more? or to get the beginning somewhere else, and then come to Christ for the rest? This bewrays your pride, and ignorance of the entire corruption of your nature, and of your impotency to any good. This frame discovers your ignorance of the nature of the grace of God, that consists in

in its freedom; as its glory is, in its being the original cauſe of all good done for us, and wrought in us, or by us.

Anſ. 2. Chriſt never bid any man be or do any thing without him, and then come to him, and he would do more for him. Chriſt calls men as he finds them, and then makes them what he would have them: *He begins the good work in them, and performs it*, Phil. i. 6.

Anſ. 3. Theſe and many ſuch like calls and invitations do not limit and reſtrain the univerſality of the goſpel-command, but do graciouſly apply it to ſuch caſes wherein they that are, are apt to think that they are ſpecially excepted. What is more common than ſuch arguings of unbelief: I have a vaſt load of ſin lying on me; I have ſpent my time, and ſtrength, and money, on ſin and vanity; I have been wearied in the greatneſs of my way of departing from the Lord, and therefore the Lord will not receive me? Therefore ſuch are named particularly by the Lord, and eſpecially called.

Therefore let no man, whatſoever he hath been, or is, think, that he is not commanded to come to this throne of grace. Take the command, lay it on your conſcience, give obedience to it; take the command for your warrant, and never fear but you ſhall be welcome. Can your ſoul ſay, Lord, no man out of hell is more needy of thy ſaving grace than I, no ſinner more unworthy of it than I; yet, becauſe thou commandeſt me to come, I come to beg, and to receive? He will ſweetly receive you: *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out*, John vi. 37. A text that hath been an anchor-hold to many a ſinking ſinner.

4. All ſhould come to the throne of grace, becauſe of the univerſality, vaſt extent, and indefiniteneſs of the promiſe of welcome to all that come. The command of God is a warrant and ground for our obedience, and the promiſe is a ground for confidence. The promiſe

promiſe is God's great mean for working faith; faith is the impreſſion God makes on the ſoul of a man by the promiſe. When God takes the promiſe of the goſpel, and applies it with the power of his grace upon the ſoul, it leaves an abiding mark and ſignature; and that is faith. The promiſe comes as the promiſe of a faithful God, who cannot lye, of a great ſalvation, to a great ſinner. When the ſinner ſees and feels the truth and goodneſs of this promiſe, he believes. This promiſe of God is to be preached to all that hear the goſpel; or rather, this promiſe is the goſpel; the Lord will make it effectual as he ſeeth good. The apoſtle Peter encouraged ſuch men to come to the throne of grace, who, if ever any in the world ſhould have been kept back, it ſhould have been they; a crew of the bloody murderers of the Son of God. But the word preached by Peter takes hold of their ſouls, and they cry out, *What ſhall we do?* No wonder they ſaid ſo, when the cry of Chriſt's blood was in their conſciences. The apoſtle ſaith to them, Acts ii. 38. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt*, &c. Their ſin was very great, peculiar to them only; none before or after them were guilty of this. The cry of innocent blood is a dreadful cry. But this was more than all the murders ever committed in the world. It was the murdering *the Son of God*, it was ſlaying *the Prince of life;* it was all that the devil and wicked world could do, to cut the throat of the goſpel, and of all the elect of God: and this wicked act was done againſt Chriſt, becauſe he taught that he was the Son of God, and that he came from the Father to be the Saviour of the world. Yet, ſaith the apoſtle to them, Repent, and be baptized in his name, for the remiſſion of that ſin; you that have been dipped in his blood, and ſo dreadfully guilty by the ſhedding of it, be baptized in his name, for the remiſſion of that guilt,

and of all others. This calling for repenting of their guilt of Chriſt's blood, was plainly a requiring of faith in him; not only that he was the Lord Chriſt they had ſlain in their unbelief, but that pardon, in the virtue of that blood, might be had by them, on their betaking themſelves to him by faith. So did the ſame apoſtle preach to the council, Acts v. 28, 31. when he and his brethren were charged by the high prieſt, for *filling Jeruſalem with the doctrine of Chriſt, and intending to bring his blood upon them: Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins.* He directs them to look to Chriſt as the giver of repentance for, and of forgiveneſs of all their ſins; not excluding, but by, ver. 30. plainly inlcuding the greateſt of all their ſins, their *ſlaying of Chriſt, and hanging him on a tree:* and this they did *with wicked hands*, Acts ii. 23. and with hearts as wicked as their hands. Yet thus did Peter preach Chriſt. So well did he remember his Lord's command, Luke xxiv. 47. *That repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* His argument is, Acts ii. 39. *For the promiſe is to you, and to your children.* Had they not ſlain the heir, and foundation of all the promiſes? Had they not done as much as men could do, to forfeit all intereſt in the promiſe? Yes; but Peter ſtill invites them to the throne of grace, by an intereſt yet in the promiſe. The promiſe of grace and ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, is the rope and cord that God caſts out to ſinking ſinners: it is equally in the offer of all in the goſpel. It is true, that the Lord means and deſigns it to ſome particular perſons; but that deſign is ſecret, and utterly unknown to all, till the promiſe itſelf be apprehended by faith, or finally rejected by unbelief. See Jer. xxxviii. 7.—14. Ebed-melech let down a rope to draw Jeremiah out of the dungeon by. The cords could never have pulled him up, unleſs the prophet had put them under

der him, and unleſs his friend had drawn him up. He did ſo, and ventures on this means of eſcape. He ventures on the ſtrength of the cord, and on the truſtineſs of his friend. If either of them had failed him, he might have fallen down, and broke his neck; or ſtuck ſtill in the mire, and ſtarved in the pit. The caſe is ſo here. The promiſe of ſalvation is a great ſecurity; but it is ſo only to them that caſt themſelves on it, and truſt to it. Whoever will truſt in God's promiſe in Chriſt, will find, that it is able to bear all their weight, if it were never ſo great. Therefore lay this warm promiſe to thy cold heart, and, by the Lord's bleſſing, life and warmth will come in. Try the ſtrength of the promiſe, by caſting all thy burden on it; and it will never ſink under thee, nor thou periſh by its failing. Chriſtians think, that the promiſes of God are a bleſſed charter, (and ſo indeed they are); but few mind the promiſes as God's tendered and offered ſecurity to men; whereby, as means, he works faith in his choſen; and, by the offer of them to all in the goſpel, leaves unbelievers inexcuſable. Sinners periſh under the goſpel, not becauſe there is no cord of ſalvation caſt out to them, but becauſe they either love the pit they are in, or cannot truſt God's faithful promiſe of ſalvation by Chriſt for their delivery.

So much of the firſt thing, the proving that all ought to come to the throne of grace, or to God in Chriſt ſitting on it. God is not otherwiſe approachable; univerſal need of this throne, and of the bleſſings given at it; an univerſal call and command of God to come; an univerſal promiſe to all that do come; all prove that all men ſhould come.

II. But though it be the duty of all to come, yet but few do come. We would therefore ſee who they, be that will come to the throne of grace. Of ſuch we have two words.

1. Such as are given of the Father to the Son; all they, and they only, will come to this throne of

grace: *All that the Father giveth me, ſhall come to me*, ſaith Chriſt, John vi. 37. *Ye believe not; becauſe ye are not of my ſheep*, John x. 26. The high ſpring of all the effectual calling and coming of men to Chriſt is this; *They that are ordained to eternal life, believe*, and none but they. It would be very unfit, that the book of life ſhould be opened to, and read by any preacher of the goſpel. I think not that ever any apoſtle had it opened to them with reſpect to others, ſo that they ſhould be able, when looking on the multitude they preached to, to ſay, Theſe are appointed for eternal life, and theſe paſſed by. But they being happily in the dark as to this ſecret purpoſe of God, did offer ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt to all that heard them. So Paul, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins; and by him all that believe, are juſtified from all things, from which ye could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes.* Having told them this good news, he, ver. 40, 41. warns them: *Beware therefore, leſt that come upon you which is ſpoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye deſpiſers, and wonder, and periſh.* After his repeated pains on them, it is ſaid, ver. 48. *As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.* It was a ſevere application of this word, that a very worthy divine made of it, that all the elect of God in this place were gathered in, by Paul's miniſtry in it, at this time. The grace of election is the ſpring of faith, 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. but this grace of election is not ſeen, but in the gift and light of faith.

2. All ſuch, and only they, will come to the throne of grace, that are drawn by the Father: John vi. 44, 45. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him: and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day. It is written in the prophets, And they ſhall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Obſerve here the two univerſals: *No*

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man can come, unleſs drawn; Every man that is drawn, doth come.

The firſt decries the power of nature, the latter advanceth the power of God's grace. The utter impotence of nature, and omnipotence of grace, in the buſineſs of man's ſalvation, are ſtumbling-blocks to all the ungodly, but are foundations in Chriſtian doctrine. The one lays man in the duſt, the other raiſeth him on a new bottom of the grace of God. When God hath a mind to draw a ſinner to Chriſt, and to make him a believer on him to ſalvation, he teacheth him ſecretly and by a ſtrong hand; he whiſpers into his heart the excellency of the Saviour, and greatneſs of his ſalvation; ſo that ſurely the periſhing ſinner comes to Chriſt, and as ſurely is welcomed and ſaved by him.

III. But who ſhall be welcome? Surely all that come, ſhall be welcome; as the word every-where witneſſeth: and all that ever tried it, have found and teſtify it by their experience. For as the Son refuſed none that were given him of the Father in their eternal counſel, but took every one of them as his charge to redeem them; ſo all they, and only they, being drawn by the Father, and made willing to come to Chriſt, are made welcome by him, John vi. 37. He knows his ſheep, when wandering on the mountains, John x. 16, 27, 28. and accordingly receives them. When the Father drives home the loſt ſheep to their great Shepherd, Chriſt knows them before he opens the fold to them; and becauſe he knows them, he lets them in, that they may find paſture, and feed on him and his grace to eternal life.

But there are ſome that are ſpecially welcome to Chriſt, and ſpeed well at this throne of grace. As,

1. They that come when they can do nothing elſe; they that come to the throne of grace as their laſt ſhift: *We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*, ſaid Jehoſhaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. Sincereſt believing, and ſtrongeſt believing, is acted, when a man

man hath no prop at all to lean upon, but God alone. Believing is called *fleeing: We have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us*, Heb. vi. 18. Now who flees? Only he that can ſtand no longer, that is not able to deal with his adverſary and danger, that hath no hope of prevailing by his ſtrength, and therefore betakes himſelf to his heels. It is men's great ſin to endeavour to ſeek that elſewhere, that only is to be found here, mercy and grace. But it is the greateſt ſin of all, to count all loſt, as long as this throne ſtands, and the Lord calls men to come to it. Be deeply humbled, and covered with ſhame; yet come notwithſtanding. Such is the corruption of our hearts, and the Lord ſeeth it well, that if ſinners could find grace and mercy any where elſe, they would never come to the throne of grace for it. Chriſt is the laſt ſhift of a diſtreſſed ſinner; yet, bleſſed be his name, he welcomes the comer. The woman, Mark v. 25,—35. tries many means ere ſhe comes to Chriſt, yet ſped well when ſhe came at laſt.

2. They are welcome to the throne of grace that come oftеſt, and aſk the greateſt things. It is otherwiſe in addreſſes to friends, or great men on earth. You may be welcome to them, if you come now and then, and if you aſk little things; but if you come daily, and aſk great things, and grow in your ſuits, they will quickly be weary of you. But what ſaith the King on this throne of grace? John xvi. 24. *Hitherto ye have aſked nothing in my name: aſk, and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.* Had not they aſked formerly great things? that he would *expound his word to them*, Matth. xiii. 36. that he would *teach them to pray*, Luke xi. 1. that he would *increaſe their faith*, Luke xvii. 5. But all this was as nothing to Chriſt; nothing in regard of the great things he had to give, and they ſtood in need of. This is a great word of Chriſt's, *Aſk, and I will give, and ye ſhall receive*; aſk ſtill more, and ye ſhall receive more, even till your joy be full. The reaſon why our ſouls

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are ſo empty of joy, is becauſe our mouths are empty of prayer. Chriſt's love-quarrels with his people, are three. 1. That they do not aſk great things, and often. 2. That they do not receive what he is ſo ready to give. Our narrow veſſels cannot take in large floods from the fountain of living water. 3. That they do not praiſe for what they receive. It is his due, our duty, and our great mercy. Both prayer and praiſe widens the heart for receiving more of Chriſt's fulneſs.

3. They are ſpecially welcome to the throne of grace that come to ſtay, reſolving never to leave it; that not only come to it at a pinch and ſtrait, but come to abide there. Our Lord teacheth ſeveral parables, to encourage and direct us in plying the throne of grace, Luke xi. 5,—13. and xviii. 1,—8. Jacob was a bleſſed man, and knew well the manner of this court, when he wreſtled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 24,—30.; and that angel was the King of the throne of grace, Hoſea xii. 3, 4, 5. After a long night's wreſtling, with weeping and ſupplications, ſaith the Lord, Gen. xxxii. 26. *Let me go, for the day breaketh*, Jacob anſwers, *I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me. I will*, or *I will not*, looks like ill manners in ſpeaking to God. He ſaith not, How can I hold thee? If thou haſt a mind to go, it is impoſſible that I can detain thee. Can a man hold God when he hath a mind to be gone? But Jacob knew his party, and perceived that he tried him, if he would part without a bleſſing. "Nay, ſaith Jacob, if thou aſk my leave "and conſent to part ſo, I will never give it. Let "the day break, and the next night come, the great "Bleſſer, and lame halting Jacob, ſhall never part, "with Jacob's conſent, without a bleſſing." And he prevailed. He had got his father's bleſſing, by the cunning of his mother, Gen. xxvii.; had it again ratified by his father, Gen. xxviii. 3, 4.; he had the Lord's bleſſing, Gen. xxviii. 12,—16.; he got it renewed again, on the Lord's calling him to return to Canaan,

Canaan, Gen. xxxi. 3. : Yet he was in a new ſtrait, and wanted a new bleſſing, and wreſtled for it, and obtained it. Let all the ſeed of Jacob imitate his practice, and they ſhall ſhare in his bleſſing, and be *fed with the heritage of Jacob their father*, as the word is, Iſa. lviii. 14.

In preſſing the exhortation in the text, I ſhall lay before you a few conſiderations.

1. Conſider the greatneſs of this privilege, that there is a throne of grace erected for ſinners, and revealed to them. This throne is only erected for ſinners: it had never been but for ſinners. A throne of grace ſuppoſeth, that there are guilty ſinners to ſtand before it, and to get good by it. The greatneſs of this privilege is apparent in comparing the ſtate of fallen man with that of fallen angels; and in comparing their ſtate that have the goſpel, with theirs that are without it.

1*ſt*. Compare the ſtate of fallen man with that of fallen angels. Whatſoever the proper meaning of that word is Pſalm. viii. 5. *Thou haſt made him a little lower than the angels*, theſe two may be well conceived; That man in his original make was lower in dignity than the angels; and that man was made a little after the angels were made: and long after it could not be; for the whole old creation was compleatly finiſhed in ſix days. The angels that fell, are ſo ſinful and miſerable, that we cannot ſpeak any good of them; yet, in their firſt make, they were a very glorious part of the creation. Notwithſtanding, when they ſinned, there was no throne of grace provided for them: *God ſpared not the angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to hell*, 2. Peter ii. 4; yet, for his elect, he *ſpared not his own Son*, Rom. viii. 32. The devils, (for ſuch ſin made them), immediatly upon their ſinning, were as much condemned as ever they ſhall be: I ſay not as much executed; for it ſeems that their full torment is reſerved to the laſt day, Jude, ver. 6. 2 Peter ii. 4. *Art thou come to torment*

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us before the time? Matt. viii. 29, ſay they to Chriſt. No wonder the devil be ſuch an enemy to the goſpel of man's ſalvation, and a hater of the throne of grace. The wonder is, that men ſhould be deceived by Satan, to deſpiſe and ſlight this great privilege. Let Chriſtians take a view of this aſtoniſhing appearance of God's grace, that fallen angels are all paſſed by, and fallen man taken up; not indeed all of them, but a great many, as one day will declare: Heb. ii. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham.*

2*dly*, Conſider the greatneſs of this privilege in the revelation of it. You have it, but the greateſt part of the world have it not. They that cannot receive the truth of God revealed in the word about the ſovereignty of grace in election, and the efficacy of diſtinguiſhing grace in calling, muſt ſee the ſame ſovereignty acted in diſpenſing or with-holding the means of grace as pleaſeth him. And to be utterly ignorant that there is a throne of grace, renders people as miſerable as if there was no throne of grace at all. They that never hear of Chriſt, muſt periſh. It is an idle dream, that the efficacy of Chriſt's death may be applied, and profitable to the ſaving of adult perſons that never heard of him. There is no ſalvation for men but by Jeſus Chriſt; there is no knowing of it, or partaking of it, but by *the word of truth, the goſpel of our ſalvation*, Eph. i. 13. Chriſt and his name go together: Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there ſalvation in any other;* (no Saviour but he): *for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved.* No other way of getting good by him, but by hearing of his name, and believing on his name: *How ſhall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14. It is a wonderful mercy to hear of him; but woe to them that hear, and do not believe. None can believe without hearing, Rom. x. 17: but alas! many hear, and believe not, Iſa. liii. 1.

2. Consider the great advantages of this privilege, of having a throne of grace erected for us, and revealed to us. All blessings may be had here, by coming for them. If there was such a throne in this world, for silver, and gold, and health, and outward mercies, what strange crowding would there be to it? The blessings to be had here, are innumerable for multitude; *all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus*, Eph. i. 3.; blessings invaluable for their worth, eternal in their duration, most free in their tenure, and all given in love. Every act of favour from the throne of grace, is more worth than all God's common mercies. *Lord, lift up upon us the light of thy countenance*, Psal. iv. 6, 7. that will put joy into the soul. Every thing given at the throne of grace, is a blessing of grace. Its very name should teach people how to come, and how to call what they get at it. If it be a throne of grace, we should come to it as empty, needy beggars; and when we receive any thing there, we should call and count it grace. Ask all saints on earth, and they will witness, that great and good things are to be had at the throne of grace. Try it yourselves, and you will find it is not in vain to beg here. Nay, the damned in hell do bear sad witness, that great are the blessings that are to be had at the throne of grace, which they feel and know by their woeful and eternal loss of them. The glorified in heaven know what a rich throne of grace this is. Only sinners on earth will not believe this, nor use this throne as they should.

3. Consider that this court and throne is of short continuance. It will not be kept up always. There is a limitation of the time of its lasting; as Heb. iv. 7. *He limiteth a certain day.* The day of the continuance of the throne of grace, is bounded and limited with four days; the day of a man's life; the gospel-day, the world's day, and the Spirit's day.

1st, The day of every man's life. This hath bounds set to it by God, Job xiv. 5. The throne of grace continues

continues unto men no longer than they live. When men die, they go not to the throne of grace, but of glory and judgment. If we have ſped well at the throne of grace, we ſhall be welcome to the throne of glory. The uncertainty and ſhortneſs of life, with the certainty of the expiring of all treaties betwixt God and us about ſalvation at the end of life, ſhould make people careful to ſecure the main matter in God's time.

2*dly*, There is the goſpel-day. This is alſo ſet and limited by the Lord. He hath determined how many offers you ſhall have of Chriſt; and when they come to an end, there will not be one more. And then the throne of grace is taken down as to you. Luke xix. 42. *If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!* ſaith our Lord to Jeruſalem. This was the ending determining day to Jeruſalem as a city, and to its inhabitants as a body. Though many particular perſons had another day of grace; yet the ſlipping of that day hangs on that poor people and their poſterity to this very day.

3*dly*, There is the world's day. And then the day of grace will end as to all: *When the bridegroom came, they that were ready, entered with him to the marriage. and the door was ſhut*, Matth. xxv. 10. There was no more grace to be diſpenſed to men; and we know not when that day will come. Miſerable is their caſe, who ſhall ſee Chriſt coming in the clouds of heaven, before they have ſeen him by faith in the goſpel; who hear the voice of the arch-angel, and the trump of God, before they have heard the quickening voice of the Son of God from the throne of grace; who have neglected calling on him in time, and begin out of time, Luke xiii. 25. *When the maſter of the houſe is riſen up, and hath ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Is it not juſt that they ſhould be kept at the ſhut door, that would not enter at an open

door in Chriſt's time, and when he called? When Chriſt comes, and hath ſhut the door no man will be let in, knock as he will. Nor, while the throne of grace is patent, no man will be kept out, be what he will, that hath a mind to enter, and knocks for entrance.

4*thly*, There is the Spirit's day. Here is a great depth of God's ſovereignty and wiſdom, a great depth of his ſeverity, an unaccountable and awful judgment; how the Spirit of God ſtrives with men in the goſpel, how near he comes to them ſometimes, how cloſe he beſiegeth them, that they ſeem to be on the point of yielding, and are not far from the kingdom of God; and yet he draws back his hand, and leaves them. I believe, that many ungodly men, many reprobates, have been ſometimes in their life nearer to heaven, (if ſuch may be ſaid to be near to heaven that never come there) than many an elect perſon was half an hour before his converſion: Gen. vi. 3. *My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man.* What kind of ſtriving this was, and what became of them ſtriven with, we have, 1 Peter iii. 19, 20. Nothing will more bitterly aggravate the eternal miſery of the damned, than the remembrance of this, that they had a day, and in that day grace offered to them, and that they did reject the offer. Men's carnal hearts are now full of cavils againſt the unſearchable methods and ways of God towards the ſons of men; but the laſt day's judgment will determine and declare, that in the perdition of the ungodly, there was, and is, moſt pure and unſpotted juſtice and righteouſneſs; and, in the ſalvation of all the elect, pure, perfect, and predominant grace, that reigned in them, and over them, and through them, till it brought them to heaven.

Wherefore, ſeeing the having of a throne of grace is a privilege of ſo great importance, and of ſo uncertain continuance, there ſhould be the greater care to make diligent and preſent improvement of it. Why

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ſhould any man let this throne of grace ſtand empty? Will men provoke the Lord to ſay, In vain have I ſet up a throne of grace for ſinners that come not at it?

Again, Conſider the wrath that will follow on the neglect, and not improving of this great privilege. The ſin is many ways committed, and the judgments of many ſorts that are inflicted. But I leave this to the next occaſion.

Except you, in your perſonal exerciſe and experience, do know what this throne of grace is, and what is got there; you may be Chriſtians hereafter, but as yet you are none; unleſs you experience what this throne of grace is, by frequent repairing to it, and by frequent receiving good at it. That man or woman, whatever his or her name be in the world, or the church of Chriſt, that never found any need for, or uſe of, or benefit by this throne of grace, is ſurely a dead ſinner. People may ſafely and ſurely judge of both the ſtate and frame of their ſouls, by their buſineſs at the throne of grace. Never got any ſoul life, but by an act of grace and power from this throne. No ſoul can be kept in life, but by daily intercourſe with it. It is as impoſſible that theſe bodies of ours ſhould be maintained in life and ſtrength without meat, and drink, and air; as it is for the ſoul of a believer to proſper without daily plying the throne of grace.

Let therefore the exhortation in the text be complied with, Come to this throne. Say therefore, Lord, I am invited to come to the throne of thy grace, and none have more need of that grace than I, and there is enough of grace there for me; and therefore I will come, and beg, and get, and abide, and bleſs the giver, and become happy by receiving.

SERMON

SERMON III.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I HAVE ſpoke of the firſt thing that this text contains, That God in Jeſus Chriſt, in the goſpel, is on a throne of grace, inviting men to come to him. What this throne of grace is; why all ſhould come; who they be that will come; and who will be ſpecially welcome, you have heard. I was preſſing this exhortation of coming to this throne. You ſee the Apoſtle, in delivering this, takes in himſelf with them he exhorts *Let us come.* He had oft come before, and had been bountifully dealt with at this court. 1 Tim. i. 14. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant* towards him. This made him commend this throne ſo highly, and intreat others, and ſtir up himſelf, to frequent addreſſes to it. I did uſe three arguments to back this exhortation, and ſhall add a fourth.

1. The firſt was the greateſt of the privilege, of having a throne of grace to come unto; a privilege denied to fallen angels, and the knowledge of it denied to the far greater part of mankind.

2. This throne of grace is a privilege full of rich advantages. All believers know ſomewhat of them. All their acceptance with God, all their acceſs to God, all their communications from him, and fellowſhip with him, all their bleſſings in time, and their hopes for eternity, are all owing to this, that God is on a throne of grace.

3. This

3. This privilege is of uncertain duration, and ſhort. The Lord the king is for ever; but the throne of grace is not for ever. It is but a time-diſpenſation; and limited unto certain ſeaſons. The goſpel-day is uncertain, our lifetime is uncertain, the world's day is uncertain, to us, though all determined by God. But above all, the Spirit's day is uncertain. How long he will ſtrive, when he will forbear, who can tell? Some godly men have thought, that there are few (if any) that live under a powerful miniſtry, but, at ſome time of their life, the Spirit of God comes cloſe to them; ſo that there is not only a witneſs given for the Lord in the offers of the goſpel, but there is a further addition to that witneſs, by ſome ſpecial approaches of God's Spirit to their hearts. But whatever there be in that obſervation, this is undoubted, that where the Holy Ghoſt makes the ſtrongeſt aſſaults on men, if he be reſiſted, and withdraws, the moſt prodigious hardneſs is left behind. Therefore extraordinary, bold, hardened ſinners, cruel perſecutors, apoſtates, and mockers of godlineſs, are uſually ſuch as ſometimes were under ſpecial conviction: not to ſpeak of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; which conſiſts in ſome high rebellion againſt ſpecial workings of the Spirit of God on men's conſciences under the goſpel. This dreadful ſin Satan perplexeth many believers with fears of it. But it is certain, that a diſturbing fear of this guilt is a proof of a perſon's innocency as to it. For whoſoever have fallen into this abyſs of wickedneſs, are ſo far from fearing the ſin, (though they may have a hopeleſs fear of wrath, Heb. x. 27.) that they glory in it; therefore they are ſaid to *do deſpite to the Spirit of grace.* Let all that find the Spirit ſtriving with them, take good heed to themſelves, comply with his motions, and ſecure their ſtate ſpeedily, by believing on the Lord Jeſus; for the ſeaſon of his ſtriving is the moſt critical part of our life, and, as it iſſues, of greateſt conſequences to ſalvation or damnation.

4. A

4. A fourth argument I would conclude this point with is, the greatneſs of the ſin of not coming to the throne of grace, and the dreadful wrath it draws on. This ſin is many ways committed, and many ways avenged. A little of both.

Firſt, It is committed, 1. By men's deſpiſing and contemning the throne of grace; *making light of it*, Matth. xxii. 5. *neglecting ſo great ſalvation*, Heb. ii. 3. There are many things from whence this contempt ſprings. Either no ſenſe of their need of what is to be had at the throne of grace; or elſe a dream, that they may be ſupplied elſewhere; or groſs unbelief, that men think in their hearts, that all this account of the throne of grace is but a cunningly deviſed fable; or the nature of the bleſſings, ſpiritual and eternal, unſuitable to, and not taking with their carnal hearts, who mind earthly things. If the exhortation had run thus, Let us come, that we may get ſilver, and obtain gold, to render us rich in this world; what leaping and ſtriving would there be to obey it? whilſt grace and mercy, that men have no ſenſe nor experience of, are deſpiſed; and therefore the throne of grace, where only they are to be had, is deſpiſed alſo. The Spirit of God in the ſcripture is at much pains to commend the worth and value of the bleſſings that Chriſt came to purchaſe, and hath to diſpenſe, and to prefer them above all preſent ſenſible things; yet, notwithſtanding all the bright light of the word darting daily in men's eyes, the droſs and dung of this world is more precious in the eyes, and ſavoury to the heart of every ungodly man, than all the grace given on earth, and all the glory to be given in heaven.

2. This ſin of not coming, is committed by delaying to come. The call of God is, *Let us come*; the anſwer of many hearts is, *Let us delay to come*; Whence think you that theſe delays come? We have it daily to bewail before God and you, that a multitude will come together to hear, and do ſo day by day; yet all

that

that can be ſaid to them, from their childhood to their old age, never prevailed with many of them to ſpend one hour in ſerious treating at the throne of grace, with God in Chriſt, for the eternal ſalvation of their ſouls. It is undeniable, that ye are but a pack of groſs hypocrites, if you attend on the means of grace in the aſſemblies of ſaints, and yet have no particular perſonal errand to the throne of grace for your own ſouls. The ſalvation of the ſoul is not carried on in a crowd. The grace of God muſt be particularly applied to you, and you muſt particularly apply it to yourſelves, and yourſelves to the throne of grace, if ever you be ſaved. The fellowſhip of ſaints was never ordained for this end, to render perſonal applications to God needleſs; and it is groſsly abuſed when it is ſo perverted. It is impoſſible, that a perſon can have any true fellowſhip with ſaints in any ordinance of God, unleſs he hath particular buſineſs at the throne of grace for himſelf. He hath indeed no true religion, whoſe all of religion is in company and in public. Yet we ſee how backward many profeſſors are to this perſonal treating with God; how many ſhifts and delays they make. To ſuch I ſay, Would it not be a terror to you, if either God, or man, or angels, or the devil, ſhould tell you this day, that, from this time to your dying day, you ſhall never have leiſure, nor heart, nor time, to ſpend one quarter of an hour in dealing with God for your eternal ſalvation! Would not this be terrible to you! But the ſame dreadful thing is done daily by men's delays. The call of God is to-day, you ſay to-morrow; when to-morrow comes, then you ſay next day; when that comes, you put it ſtill farther off. This you may be ſure of, that whatever is the true ſpring and cauſe of delays in this matter, will ſtill remain and gather ſtrength, unleſs the grace of God come in. Men deceive themſelves with vain pretences: but the true ſpring of all delays in treating in earneſt with God at the throne of grace, is unbelief and unwillingneſs; and the more they are

indulged by delaying, the ſtronger they grow. *Therefore the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, Heb. iii. 7, 8. See how the Spirit of God fixeth an oppoſition betwixt theſe two, *preſent hearing*, and *preſent hardening*; and a conjunction betwixt theſe two, *preſent not hearing*, and *hardening*. If there is preſent hearing, there is no preſent hardening; if not, there is. The refuſal given to the to-day's call of God, hardens the heart againſt to-morrow's call. O, that men dreaded delays as moſt perilous things, and the cauſe of the everlaſting ruin of multitudes under the goſpel!

3. Another way wherein this ſin of not coming to the throne of God's grace is acted, is in refuſing to come. All do not ſo groſsly, but ſome do. There are two ſorts of refuſers; the ſecure, and the diſcouraged. There is a woeful plague of ſecure deſpair; a ſtrange plague, but a certain one. Some people find things are bad with them as to their ſouls, ſins many, corruptions ſtrong; they have made ſome eſſays to get matters mended, and all in vain: whereon they conclude, that it will never be better; and they ſit down in ſecurity, and give themſelves up to their pleaſures: Iſa. xxii. 13. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we ſhall die.* A ſtrange argument. Approach of death uſually mars the taſte of pleaſure. The hand-writing on the wall, even when not known, marred Belſhazzar's cheer, Dan. v. This is a very miſerable and ſinful caſe. It ſprings from men's being ignorant of the true remedy, when they were ſick of ſin; and becauſe all the phyſic and phyſicians they uſed and tried did them no good, they conclude their ſickneſs is unto death. But let ſuch know, that *there is hope in Iſrael concerning this thing*. Only come and ſee, and try what may be done. Beware of deſpair; it is the devil's ſin. But he hath reaſon for it: for he is condemned; and all doors of hope are eternally ſhut upon him, or rather none was ever opened to him. But for a man that hath *the riches of God's long-*

ſuffer-

ſuffering, forbearance, and patience, Rom. ii. 4.), daily laid upon him; that the door of grace ſet open to him, and the Lord calling, intreating, promiſing acceptance on his coming; for ſuch a man to give over all hope, is a ſin ſome way worſe than the devil's; a frame pleaſing only to the devil, moſt diſhonourable to God, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Holy Ghoſt, (I do not call it the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt); a reflection on all the glorious appearances and manifeſtations of the throne of grace, and moſt ſurely damning if continued in. Away with it ſpeedily: conclude thy caſe is not deſperate; and if you cannot ſhake it off, come to the throne of grace, and complain of it. If ye can but ſee the throne, and him that ſits upon it, deſpair will vaniſh as a night-owl on the bright ſhining of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. Deſpair cannot live in the preſence of the glorious grace of Jeſus Chriſt. Come then and ſee, and lay hold on the hope ſet before you. The other refuſers to come, are the diſcouraged. They do not deſpair that their caſe cannot be mended; but they ſee ſo much, and ſo many things out of order, that their hearts fail them in applying to the only remedy. In the time of their carnal ſecurity, and ignorance of God and of themſelves, (that bred and kept up that ſecurity), they could ruſh into God's preſence without fear, and call and count all the bleſſings of the covenant theirs, without any doubt, and yet without any ground. But when God began to deal with them and to come cloſe to them, and to ſend in light and life into their conſciences, then they ſee their former miſtakes; they ſee their utter want and great need of thoſe bleſſings they once dreamed they were rich in the poſſeſſion of; they ſee their utter unworthineſs of them; and therefore find it hard to believe, that ever the Lord will welcome them to the throne of his grace. Uſually beginners in Chriſtianity have greater light and ſenſe as to their neceſſity of ſaving grace and mercy, than about the Lord's willingneſs to give

them. And this is the ſeaſon wherein Satan doth uſually come in (if permitted, and often he is) with his temptations and fiery darts, that they felt nothing of while they were in his kingdom and power of darkneſs. To ſuch I would propoſe three things:

1*ſt*, What is the ground of thy diſcouragement? Hereto I know they will ſay a great deal, and it may be more than is true. I grant all can be ſaid to be true. But the ſum of all is, I am a great ſinner, and exceeding miſerable. Be humbled as low as hell in the ſenſe thereof, yet be not diſcouraged. What is in thy caſe but what is common? Only thou feeſt and feeleſt for thyſelf, and ſo did others.

2*dly*, What is the tendency of it? Doth it tend to keep thee aloof from the throne of grace? It is then, of Satan.

3*dly*, What can be the cure of it? You would not be always in this heartleſs frame. How think you to get it removed? by keeping ſtill from the throne of grace? Will, or can, any ſpiritual plagues be cured, but by Chriſt the Phyſician? or any ſpiritual bleſſing be got, but at his door? Can you expect it without coming, and begging? David took the right courſe with his fainting heart, Pſal. xlii. 5.; he challengeth his ſoul for its diſquietment; he chargeth it to truſt in God: and becauſe he had not prevailed with his ſoul, he brings it to God by faith, ver. 6. *O my God, my ſoul is caſt down within me.* Do ye ſo; and call upon him by that name, *God that comforteth thoſe that are caſt down*, 2 Cor. vii. 6.

I ſhall name no more of the ways this ſin is acted than theſe three; deſpiſing, delaying, and refuſing. Several other expreſſions there are of this ſin in the word; but if you be kept from theſe three, you are *innocent from the great tranſgreſſion.*

Secondly, What is the wrath revealed from heaven for this great ſin of not coming to the throne of grace?

1. God teſtifies his diſpleaſure againſt this ſin, by taking away of his goſpel. Nothing is more juſt with God,

God, than that, when his grace is ſlighted, the means of grace ſhould be removed. If the Lord argue ſo as to correction, Iſa. i. 5. *Why ſhould ye be ſtricken any more? ye will revolt more and more;* much more may he argue thus, Why ſhould I keep up a throne of grace any longer? you will but deſpiſe it more and more. Chriſt teacheth a ſad parable, Matth. xxi. 33, &c. and makes a juſt, but dreadful application of it to the hearts, ver. 43. *Therefore I ſay unto you, The kingdom of God* (another name of the throne of grace) *ſhall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* They were *cut off for their unbelief*, Rom. xi. 20. With what face can an unbeliever beg of God the continuance of the means of grace, who hath no mind to enjoy the end and bleſſing of thoſe means? A general contempt of the grace of God enfeebleth the ſpirits of miniſters and Chriſtians ſtanding in before the Lord, for the continuance of the goſpel with a people that uſe it not. This dreadful judgment hath been often threatened in the word, and inflicted, in the ſevere providence of God, on many once-famous churches and nations. As the Lord ſaith, *But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I ſet my name at the firſt, and ſee what I did to it, for the wickedneſs of my people Iſrael*, Jer. vii. 12.; ſo I may ſay, Go to Jeruſalem, and the ſeven churches in Aſia; go to Greece and Africa, where many a famous church was planted, and learn to fear for yourſelves: not to ſpeak of later deſolations in ours and our fathers days. The Lord's removing of his goſpel, is a judgment that is very deep; as the apoſtle ſpeaks of the ſame ſubject, Rom. xi. 33. We may take notice of this judgment as brought on by prevailing errors in and about the foundation, Jeſus Chriſt; or by gradual apoſtaſy, and impurity of converſation, in profeſſors; or by the rage of perſecution, *wearing out the ſaints of the Moſt High*, Dan. vii. 25. But yet we have good grounds from the word of God to believe and hope, that the

goſpel

goſpel may be ſecured to a generation ordinarily, if they be careful to get the bleſſing thereof, and to walk worthy of it. If the grace of God itſelf be prized, the means will be continued.

2. The Lord witneſſeth his diſpleaſure againſt ſlighters of his grace, by fearful outward judgments. So fared it with Jeruſalem, according to our Lord's prediction, Luke xix. 42, 43, 44. It hath been a remark of wiſe obſervers of the providence of God towards nations ſince the reformation from Popery, That in thoſe places where the greateſt light of the goſpel hath ſhined, there the greateſt judgments have been inflicted; as in Germany, France, and amongſt ourſelves in Britain.

3. The Lord viſits for this ſin with ſpiritual judgments, the moſt wrathful diſpenſations of God on this ſide hell; as hardneſs of heart, blindneſs of mind, ſearedneſs of conſcience, vileneſs of affections; judgments which they that are under, never feel nor complain of, nor will be convinced of, though they are ſometimes viſible to others. If the Lord inflict them on the heathen for their abuſe of the dim light of nature, Rom. i. 21, 24, 26, 28. how much greater are ſuch that are ſent for the abuſe of the light of the goſpel? That dreadful commiſſion given to the moſt eminent prophet, Iſa. vi. 9, 10. is often applied and fulfilled in the New Teſtament: Matth. xiii. 14. and John xii. 39, 40. *Therefore they could not believe*, (their ſin was, ver. 37. *they believed not on him;* here is their plague, *they could not believe*), *becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they ſhould not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their hearts, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them.* Paul applies it to ſome of his unbelieving hearers, with a ſtrange preface, *Well ſpake the Holy Ghoſt by Eſaias, to our fathers, ſaying*, Acts xxviii. 25, 26. The intereſt and influence of God in ſuch ſpiritual judgments, is a great depth. They are always juſt, and always deep; and dreadful

ful are their effects. They on whom they fall, feel nothing, ſee nothing, fear nothing. So that truly we may ſay, as Pſalm lxviii. 35. *O God thou art terrible out of thy holy places.* But ſuch as have a heart to the grace of God, and would fain be bleſſed thereby, need not fear thoſe judgments, and ſhall never feel them.

4. *Laſtly,* The wrath of God againſt ſuch as come not to the throne of grace, is engraven in the ſingular vengeance of eternal ruin. There is ſomething ſingular in their hell. The law ſends all unpardoned ſinners to a law-hell: the Lord ſends deſpiſers of ſaving grace to a ſpecial hell, Heb. ii. 3. and x. 29. a *much ſorer puniſhment.* No quarters in hell are tolerable: yet our Lord ſaith, Matth. xi. 22, 24. *That it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the cities where he preached, and wrought mighty works.* We ſhould be thankful for this fair warning. I am afraid that there are very few that do truly believe this, That the condition of a ſinner under the goſpel, that is of a blameleſs converſation, and makes a fair profeſſion; only he is an unbeliever in Jeſus Chriſt, and one that hath no buſineſs at the throne of grace, he hath no other fault but that, (and he needs no more to ruin him); that this man's caſe is worſe now, and will be worſe at the laſt day, than that of the inhabitants of Sodom, on whom the Lord rained down hell from heaven. Many of our gay profeſſors, and civil moral men, would think themſelves highly affronted and undervalued, to be put in the balance with filthy Sodomites. If it were poſſible that thou had no fault but only unbelief, thy ſin is greater, thy judgment will be more dreadful, thy ſtate worſe for eternity, than that of the vileſt of the nations to whom the throne of grace was never revealed; John xv. 22. *If I had not come, and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloke for their ſin.* And to the ſame purpoſe our Lord ſpake to them, ver. 24. They were ſinners before;

before; but the contempt of that diſpenſation of grace that Chriſt brought to them, rendered them ſingular tranſgreſſors. So John iii. 17. *God ſent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be ſaved.* Are then all ſaved, and none condemned? No: Of the world that hear of God's Son ſome *believe on him*, and they are *not condemned*, but *ſaved;* and others *believe not on him*, and therefore are *condemned* ver. 18. What is the condemnation? *Light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil*, ver. 19. The law condemns them, becauſe their deeds are evil; the deſpiſed goſpel condemns them, becauſe they refuſe the only remedy. Law-ſin is poiſon to the ſoul, and kills as ſuch. Unbelief is rejecting the only antidote, and kills as ſuch. Look to one ſcripture more: Luke xix. 27. *But thoſe mine enemies which would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring hither, and ſlay them before me.* It is not uſual for kings and princes to have criminals executed in their preſence, but command it to be done by mean hands in ſome remoter place. But Chriſt will have his enemies ſlain before him. To be ſlain in Chriſt's preſence, is double deſtruction: 2 Theſſ. i. 9. *Who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction*, (ever a-deſtroying, never deſtroyed; the deſtroyer puniſheth eternally, and the deſtoyed ſuffer eternally) *from the preſence of the Lord.* The meaning is not only, that a great part of this puniſhment ſtands in being depriv-ed for eternity of the gracious preſence of Jeſus Chriſt; as in Matth. xxv. 41. The firſt and ſaddeſt word in the laſt ſentence is, *Depart from me.* Juſt; for they ſaid to him, *Depart from us; for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxi. 14. Let all trem-bling believers and lovers of Chriſt perſuade them-ſelves, that they ſhall never hear it pronounced a-gainſt them. All that make it their buſineſs to come to Chriſt, that make it their daily ſuit that he would come to them, ſhall not hear, *Depart from me;* but,

Come

Come to me, ye bleſſed. Ye often came for a bleſſing, and got many by coming; now come to receive the bleſſing of the kingdom. But this word, *from the preſence of the Lord*, ſaith further, that this deſtruction flows from Chriſt's angry and glorious preſence; and that it ſhall alſo be in his preſence; as Rev. xiv. 19. It is *in the preſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of the Lamb*, they are *tormented for ever.*

Thus having opened the firſt head in the text, That there is a throne of grace erected and revealed, in the goſpel, to which men are invited to come; I ſhall only apply it in two queſtions, and the Lord apply them to your conſciences, and make them give a right and true anſwer. They are two ſhort plain ones. 1. *Have you come?* 2. *Will ye come?*

Queſt. 1. *Have you come to the throne of grace?* Do you know and are ſure that you have come? as Peter ſaid, John vi. 68, 69. The apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch comers, Heb. xii. 24. *But ye are come to Jeſus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel.* You are all hearers of the throne of grace; many are talkers of it, and ſome diſputers and contenders about this throne: but are you comers to it? is your heart on it, your buſineſs at it, and your daily exerciſe about it, You are in the outward court; doth that ſatisfy you? Alas! many poor ſouls die and periſh there. To help to ſome conviction how it is with you as to this, I would aſk,

1. Have you come to the throne of grace? Then you *have ſeen the King.* He is a poor ſorry courtier, that goes to court every day, and never ſeeth the King's face; as Abſalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 24, 28. Alas! many live in Jeruſalem all their days, and never ſee the King that dwells in Zion. When Paul was brought to the throne of grace, Chriſt was revealed in him and to him, Gal. i. 15, 16. When men are brought and come to the throne of grace, they receive *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face*

of Jeſus Chriſt, 2 Cor. iv. 6. There is a *ſeeing of him*, joined with *believing on him*, John vi. 40. All that ſee Jeſus Chriſt, muſt have eyes from him to ſee him with; *the Spirit of wiſdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, that enlightens the eyes of men's underſtandings*, Eph. i. 17, 18. His *eye-ſalve* can only make blind ſinners to ſee, Rev. iii. 18.* Are men in doubt whether they have ſeen Chriſt or not? Whence doth it proceed? Is Chriſt ſo mean, and dark, and ordinary an object, that men may ſee him, and not know that they ſee him? A man may doubt whether his eyes take up a dim cloudy ſtar in a dark night: but the ſun doth not ſhine, or the man is blind, if he lift up his face, and doubt whether he ſee the ſun at noon-day. There is a manifeſtation of Chriſt promiſed, John xiv. 21, 23. which, when made by him, and perceived by his people, removeth all doubtings; ſo that the ſoul muſt ſay, as Iſa. xxv. 9. *This is our God, this is the Lord.* But this meaſure is not ordinary, nor conſtantly to be expected. Is there any like unto Jeſus Chriſt? Are any of *his companions*, as they are called, Song i. 7. ſo like to him, that a believer cannot diſcern the difference? Never did a man ſee Jeſus Chriſt by the eye of faith, but he is by that ſight of him perſuaded that there is none to be compared with him. No man is converted, and made a believer, but by a revelation of Jeſus Chriſt. A man may be awakened with a view of God's glory; he may be alarmed by a ſight of ſin and hell; and may be rouſed out of his ſleep of ſecurity, by the thunders of Sinai: but he is never converted, and made a Chriſtian, but by a revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, as glorious in his robes of ſalvation. Whence then it is that all believers on him do not own his manifeſting himſelf to them, and their ſeeing of him? It is in part from the weakneſs of their ſight, the greatneſs of the glory of him they ſee, and their ſtrong deſire to ſee him better. But for ſuch as have ſpent their days about the throne of grace, and yet never ſaw

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt, and the glory of God in his face as a Saviour, ſo as to diſgrace all things in compariſon with him, ſo as to raiſe deſires after more of him, and ſo as to fill their hearts with love, wonder, and praiſe; ſuch have been at the court, but have not ſeen the King on his throne.

2. Are you come to the throne of grace? What made you come? what errand did you come upon? No man comes without an errand. We need not make and ſeek one; we have enow at hand, if we would but uſe them. What wants felt you at home? and what of his fulneſs was taking with you? Can you ſay, I have a naked filthy ſoul, and I am aſhamed to look on it; but how well would the robe of his righteouſneſs fit and adorn it; I am empty of all good and he is full of all grace, on purpoſe to fill periſhing ſouls, and come for a ſhare thereof. The bleſſings of many ready to periſh hath come upon him; and I came for his rich ſalvation, and would leave my poor, but eternal bleſſing on him. They that have no particular preſſing buſineſs about their ſoul's ſalvation, may talk of the throne of grace, but do not indeed come to it.

3. What got ye? If you come indeed you receive, if you receive not, you come not. Say not, you have received nothing, becauſe you have not got all you would have. It is neceſſary, that ſuch as come, get ſomewhat; but it is not fit that they ſhould receive all that they want. A life of faith muſt be lived, and dependence and begging ſtill kept on foot. But ſomewhat is ſtill given and got, though the gift be not always ſeen, and owned. But tell me, Chriſtians indeed, have you not ſometimes got that at the throne of grace, that ye would not take a world for; Did you ever apply to this throne in earneſt, and found it in vain? Have you not ſometimes got a glance of Chriſt through the lattice, Song. ii. 9. that hath made you forget your poverty, and remember your miſery

no more? Know ye not what it is to have a ſmile of his countenance, and a token that you have found favour in his eyes? Have you not got at this throne, a word of promiſe, that hath fed and feaſted thy faith? Jer. xv. 16. *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hoſts.* Have you not ſometimes got the door of faith opened, and the eye of faith ſharpened, that ye could ſee within the vail, and behold the good land, and the bleſſed Lord of it, and thy happy intereſt in both? Let not this throne be diſparaged, both by the true emptineſs of hypocrites that are about it, rather than at it, and by the peeviſhneſs of real believers. There are no poor courtiers at this court; they are all *rich*, Rev. ii. 9. They are only *poor in ſpirit*; but not ſo poor as they think; for a *kingdom is theirs*, that is better than all kingdoms under heaven, Matth. v. 3. The world count believers poor, becauſe they ſee they often have not outward riches; and they are blind, and cannot ſee their ſpiritual riches in poſſeſſion and reverſion. The believer thinks himſelf poor, becauſe he ſeeth not all he hath in poſſeſſion, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.; and becauſe he would ſo fain have all he hath a right to, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. and the hope of; or becauſe his charters are hid, or his eyes are dim, that he cannot read them.

Queſt. 2. *Will ye come?* All is ready; come to this throne, Matth. xxii. 4. If ye have never come, begin juſt now; if ye have come often, come oftener, and come better, come nearer and cloſer ſtill. Is there any thing wanting in you? Come; for all ſupply is here. Are you guilty; Come for pardon. Many drawn pardons are at this court, drawn up ſweetly by free grace, ſealed with the blood of Jeſus. Come to this throne, and add your ſeal of faith to one for yourſelf; and it ſhall be a charter for glory to you lying warm at your heart, as long as you live and will

will be your paſſport at death. But becauſe the following words of the apoſtle in this verſe contain arguments for coming, I ſay the leſs now.

So much for the firſt head of doctrine in the text.

HEAD II. The ſecond head is, *How we ſhould come to this throne of grace? Come boldly*, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, by Paul's pen.

The point I would ſpeak to from it, is this:

DOCT. *That there is a boldneſs in men's approaching to the throne of grace, that is allowed and commanded.*

For the apoſtle doth not only mention it as a privilege allowed, but as a duty or frame injoined and commanded. So that he that comes not with this boldneſs, not only ſits down ſhort of his allowance, but ſins in diſobeying a plain command. The privilege is ſpoke of in Eph. iii. 12. *In whom* (our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as ver. 11.) *we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence, by the faith of him.* In Heb. x. 19, 22. both their privilege is aſſerted, and the improvement of it commanded, in *drawing near with full aſſurance of faith*, and that to the holieſt of all.

On this point I would ſhew,

1. What this boldneſs is that is allowed in approaching to the throne of grace.

2. What are the grounds of this boldneſs.

I. *What is the boldneſs allowed in coming to the throne of grace:*

There is a boldneſs that is not allowed, and that I would warn you of.

1. There is a boldneſs of ignorance and irreverence. When men come into God's preſence, and neither know him, nor themſelves, nor the matters they think they are come about; ſuch are *fools*, that *conſider not they do evil*, nor remember that *he is in heaven, and they*

they upon earth, Eccl. v. 1, 2. *God is greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of the ſaints; and to be had in reverence of all that are about him*, Pſal. lxxxix. 7. This boldneſs is forbidden, Pſal. ii. 11.

There is a boldneſs of peremptorineſs, that is not allowed to any man, not to a believer himſelf. People may, and do often forget themſelves; as we uſe to ſay, *Too much familiarity breeds contempt.* Condeſcenſions from ſuperiors, oft make inferiors forget their place. The Lord deals ſo graciouſly with his people, hears their prayers readily, ſtoops low to them in his love and pity, that unleſs they watch, and keep a guard on their ſpirits, they may ſoon fall into the ſin of being too ſaucy and peremptory with God.

The firſt prayer in the bible, made by the greateſt believer in the world, Abraham, is upon a moſt condeſcending appearance of God to him. The Son of God in human ſhape becomes Abraham's gueſt at meat, Gen. xviii. Some think, that Chriſt reſpects this appearance in John viii. 56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day; and he ſaw it, and was glad.* He gives him the laſt promiſe of a ſon, with a determination of the preciſe time of its accompliſhment, ver. 10. He deals with him as a *friend*, (and ſo Abraham is called, 2 Chron. xx. 7. Iſa. xli. 8. and James ii. 23.; but all believers are called *friends* by Chriſt, John xv. 14, 15.); and after a great commendation of Abraham, the Lord tells him his purpoſe of wrath againſt Sodom, ver. 17,—22. The angels are ſent to execute the vengeance, and Abraham ſtands before the Lord to plead for mercy. With what boldneſs and reverence doth he plead? The more the Lord ſtoops in condeſcending to his petitions, the more low doth Abraham lie before him. He neither forgot the Lord's majeſty, nor his own meanneſs; and expreſſeth again and again, a holy fear of offending by his renewed ſuits, ver. 27, 30, 31, 32. I would have you conſider this inſtance of prayer, becauſe it is the firſt

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recorded in the word, and becauſe it was excellently managed by the father of the faithful. So Gideon prays in Judges vi. 39. *And Gideon ſaid unto God, Let not thine anger be hot againſt me, and I will ſpeak but this once.* I am afraid that many ſincere Chriſtians are guilty of this peremptorineſs. The Lord hath been ſo condeſcending to them, that they become too peremptory about ſome particulars. Beware of it; and ſee how the Lord hath dealt with his people, and the beſt of them, Pſalm cxix. 6, 7, 8. See Moſes's lot in this matter. He had often ſought of God, and prevailed, Pſalm cvi. 23. *Therefore the Lord ſaid, that he would deſtroy them, had not Moſes his choſen ſtood before him in the breach; to turn away his wrath, leſt he ſhould deſtroy them:* A man to whom God ſpake face to face, a man to whom God ſpake ſo amazing words, *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot againſt them*, Exod. xxxii. 10.; and Numb. xiv. 20. *I have pardoned according to thy word.* Yet even this Moſes in a ſmall matter, for life, to croſs Jordan, and to ſee the promiſed land, hath this anſwer, Deut. iii. 26. *Let it ſuffice thee, ſpeak no more unto me of this matter.* Samuel is checked alſo in a ſmall matter, that had prevailed for far greater, 1 Sam. xvi. 1. *How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, ſeeing I have rejected him?* A caſe may be ſuch, that *though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before the Lord, they ſhould not prevail*, Jer. xv. 1. It is the only privilege of Jeſus Chriſt, to be *always heard*, John xi. 42. Yet, he in his agony, prayed ſo as to teach us to beware of this ſinful boldneſs, Matth. xxvi. 39. *If it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me: nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Believers muſt remember, that in all caſes they muſt deal humbly, and in ſome caſes they muſt take denials patiently.

3. There is the boldneſs of preſumption. Preſumption is like faith in appearance, but in reality it is very unlike it. Preſumption works this way: the preſumer may have the mercy in his eye, but he hath

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no promiſe in his eye. Take heed to this. If there be ſtrong deſires after a mercy, and that mercy not pleaded for as in the promiſe, there is a ſpice of preſumption in that pleading. The reaſon why believers aſk ſo great things of God, is, becauſe God hath promiſed ſo great things to them, 2 Sam. vii. 27. Hence it is that preſumption acts ordinarly in pleading with God, not for the main ſpiritual bleſſings, but for ſome outward mercy, that their hearts may be too much ſet upon. It is about ſuch that believers ſhould watch againſt this preſumptuous boldneſs. But if the pleading at the throne of grace be about ſalvation and ſpiritual bleſſings, the difference betwixt faith and preſumption appears in this: Preſumption can never plead with God, neither in deep diſtreſs, nor in the view of ſin; but it is the excellent property of faith, that can plead with God in both caſes: Pſal. lxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail againſt me: as for our tranſgreſſions, thou ſhalt purge them away:* Spoken like a believer; and Pſal. cxxx. 3, 4. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* (But can David ſtand? Yes, and he ſtands on this ground); *but there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayſt be feared.* There is juſt cauſe to ſuſpect, that there is preſumption in that man's heart, when his boldneſs is only kept up, when ſin is out of ſight, and diſappears. A believer believes moſt humbly, and often moſt ſtrongly, when his ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs is beſt ſeen: for true boldneſs of faith is not ſupported by any good or worth in us, but by what is in Chriſt. The boldneſs of faith cannot be entertained with *regarding of iniquity in the heart*, Pſal. lxvi. 18. 1 John iii. 20; yet it can, with the being and ſeeing of iniquity in both heart and life, Rom. vii. 24, 25. 1 Tim. i. 15. But of this farther from the next head, of the boldneſs of faith. I now touch it only as it differs from the preſumptuous boldneſs that is allowed to none.

6 Again, faith can ſtand under that diſtreſs that breaks the back of preſumption; Job xiii. 15, 16. *Though he*

he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He alſo ſhall be my ſalvation: for an hypocrite ſhall not come before him. "He hath "taken away my children all at once, my eſtate in "one day; hath taken away my health, and made "me miſerable, to a proverb in all ages: although "he ſhould proceed, and ſlay me with his own hand, "my ſlayer is my Saviour, my death ſhall be my ſal-"vation." Great words and hard to be ſpoken in the day of heavy trial! God ſlaying Job's ſalvation. God ſlays, Job truſts, and maintains his confidence under the ſtroke. No hypocrite can do this; and many believers do but bungle at the doing of it. There is an extremity a-coming on every man, that will try and diſcover what mettle there is in his faith; prepare for it.

What then is the boldneſs allowed in coming to the throne of grace? It muſt not be an ignorant, peremptory, or preſumptuous boldneſs. What muſt it then be?

Anſ. It is only the *boldneſs of faith*, Eph. iii. 12. Heb. x. 19. The boldneſs of faith hath this in general in it, that it is grounded and bottomed on ſomewhat without a man, and on nothing in him. It is grounded on Jeſus Chriſt, as we ſhall hear farther. It is a great miſtake in Chriſtians to think, that they cannot come to the throne of grace with boldneſs, becauſe of the many infirmities in their hearts, and in their addreſſes. Your complaint may be juſt and true; but the inference is not good. Do you never, in your counting your infirmities, put in this great one amongſt them in your confeſſions, the want of boldneſs of faith? for this boldneſs ſtands not in any thing in us, and done by us. We muſt not come boldly, becauſe we can pray well, and plead hard; we muſt not think to be heard in heaven, neither becauſe of our much ſpeaking, nor well ſpeaking, Matth. vi. 7. as the Phariſees did. The boldneſs of faith hath a high-

er, and more noble and firm foundation, even Jeſus Chriſt.

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe with theſe three acts of this allowed and commanded boldneſs of faith.

1. Believe firmly, that the throne of grace is erected for poor, empty, ſinful creatures, juſt ſuch as you be. As Paul ſaith of the law, 1 Tim. i. 9. *It is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient;* ſo may we ſay of the throne of grace, It is not made, framed, and revealed for the holy and happy, but for miſerable creatures that want mercy, and ſinful helpleſs creatures that want grace. By what is diſpenſed here, we may know for whom, and for what ſort of folks, it was deſigned and erected.

2. Believe firmly, that coming to the throne of grace by you is allowed and commanded by the Lord. Say confidently, While I am coming to the throne of grace for mercy and grace, I am in the work that the Lord would have me to be in. Take in all diſcoveries you have made unto you, or that you can find out by ſearching, of the weakneſs and infirmities that are in your way of addreſſing to it; own them humbly; but maintain this ſtedfaſtly, that though you cannot do as you would, as others do, nor as you are bid, that yet you are doing what ye are bid. They are called, Luke xiv. 21. who are *the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind!* See a promiſe looking that way, Jer. xxxi. 8, 9. Now, may not the halt and maimed be confident, that they are coming, when called, although they cannot go ſo faſt and ſtraight as others do? Every believer *walks in the ſteps of the faith of Abraham*, Rom. iv. 12. though not his pace. When you draw near to the throne of grace, aſſure your hearts you are in your duty, though many do it better than you do.

3. Believe firmly, that upon coming you ſhall ſpeed. This is coming with the boldneſs of faith. We ſhould not come with a *May be the Lord will be gracious.* It is true, that in ſome particulars, not abſolutely promiſed,

miſed, nor ſimply needful to ſalvation, this *may be* is all we can have, or ſhould ſeek. But in addreſſing for ſaving mercy and grace, people ſhould come expecting ſucceſs. It had been a cold word, if it had been ſaid, *Let us come to the throne of grace, it may be we ſhall obtain mercy and find grace.* No; the apoſtle ſpeaks in another dialect, *Let us come that we may obtain.* Never doubt of obtaining, if you come. I ſay not, that the confidence of good entertainment at this throne is common to all comers to it; but only that it is the duty of all that come for God's mercy and grace in Jeſus Chriſt, to perſuade their hearts that they ſhall obtain and find it. And good grounds there are for it, as we ſhall hear.

How is it with you Chriſtians; You often come to this throne: What are the thoughts of your hearts as to the iſſue of your addreſſes? It may be you think it is well if you can reach ſo far as this, "It may be "the Lord will receive and welcome me, and there-"fore I will try." Though there is often faith lurking under ſuch doubtings, and though a *may be* ſhould ſtir up men to come; yet this is far from the boldneſs of faith, which glorifies this throne, and him that ſitteth on it, and which is ſo becoming and profitable to all that approach it. See how an old teſtament ſaint ſpeaks, Job xxiii. 3.—6. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his ſeat:* (that is, this throne). *I would order my cauſe before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.* But cannot God eaſily ſtop this man's mouth, and bring arguments againſt Job, that he could not anſwer? Yes, ſurely he can; but he will not; *Will he plead againſt me with his great power? No, but he will put ſtrength in me.* He that I plead with, will help me to plead, and prevail. Few Chriſtians know how much glory is given to God by an enlarged heart, filled with believing expectations of good from him; and how a heart thus enlarged by faith, is fitted and diſpoſed for receiving a large bleſſing. We eaſily conceive

how ſharp hunger and thirſt, ſtrong deſires, deep ſenſe of need, and mighty pleadings and importunity, do prepare the way for great receivings; but we little think, how much force is in the bare-like argument of faith; Pſal. xvi. 1. *Preſerve me, O God; for in thee do I put my truſt.* Pſal. xxxiii. 22. *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.* Pſal. lvii. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my ſoul truſteth in thee.* There is a mighty force in ſuch pleadings of faith. "I know no help "but in and with thee; I expect it from thee, and "therefore beg it off thee." Faith in a believer never roſe ſo high, but the Lord's gracious anſwer went higher, Eph. iii. 20. Look well to your faith, believers; raiſe it high, uſe it well, and plead by it, and plead upon it. Bleſſed Jeſus will never caſt that ſoul into hell, that cannot forbear to entertain in his heart an expectation of eternal life from him, in the virtue of his precious blood, and on the warrant of his gracious promiſe. *He that believeth on him, ſhall never be confounded.* Never was any; neither ſhall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith, ſpoke by a dying man, who had been converted in a ſingular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution, of whom Mr. Fleming ſpeaks in the *Fulfilling of the ſcriptures:* his laſt words were theſe ſpoke with a mighty ſhout, "Never man periſhed with his face "towards ſweet Chriſt Jeſus."

SERMON

SERMON IV.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

IT is one of the names given to the godly in the word, that they are *the generation of them that ſeek the Lord, that ſeek his face.* Pſal. xxiv. 6. And they muſt be bold and arrogant pretenders to this name, that are guilty of the utter neglect of this duty. Since it is a duty of ſo great importance, it is needful to know how to manage it aright. This verſe gives us a great directory, how to perform in a right manner this great duty. 1. It tells us whither to come: To a *throne of grace.* 2. How we ſhould come: *With boldneſs.* Addreſſes to God may many ways miſcarry; if not made to the true God, God in Chriſt; if not in the right manner. We have here one thing about the right manner, *coming with boldneſs.*

On this I propoſe two things to be handled.

1. What is the nature of this allowed boldneſs?

2. What grounds are for it?

I. On the nature of this boldneſs, I began to ſpeak laſt day: and did mainly inſiſt on the negative.

Now it follows to ſpeak of the poſitive. It is the boldneſs of faith that is allowed and commanded here, Eph. iii. 12. Faith is a marvellous grace, both in its original, in its foundation, and in its actings and exerciſe. It is the meaneſt and loweſt of all graces. Every grace brings ſomewhat conſiderable. Love brings a flaming heart, repentance brings a bleeding heart, obedience brings a working hand, patience brings a broad back for the ſmiter; but faith brings only an empty

empty heart and hand, to be filled with borrowed and gifted bleſſings. And yet faith is the higheſt and loftieſt grace; it cannot reſt till it be in at the heart and love of God in Chriſt. Faith (if I may ſo ſpeak) can both be in heaven and hell at the ſame time. The believer looking to himſelf as in himſelf, (the apoſtle's diſtinction, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *ourſelves, as of ourſelves*), judgeth himſelf to the pit of hell, as his deſerved lot; but when he looks on himſelf as in Chriſt, he ſits high. Eph. ii. 5. 6. and *makes bold to enter into the holieſt of all*, Heb. x. 19. How many contrary ſentiments of himſelf doth a believer expreſs! only ſalved from being contradictions, by this diſtinction, That the word reveals and faith improves. *I know that in me dwells no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. How! no good thing in a man full of the Holy Ghoſt! a man rich in the grace of Chriſt! a man that had *laboured more abundantly than all the twelve apoſtles!* 1 Cor. xv. 10. *Yea*, ſaith he, *in me, that is, in my fleſh, dwells no good thing*. A believer as in himſelf, and a believer as in Chriſt, are in a manner two different, diſtinct, contrary perſons. A believer as in Chriſt, is a new creature; as in himſelf, and the remainders of corruption in him, is an old man ſtill, or rather, hath much of the old man in him. A Chriſtian hath two different oppoſite I's in him; as the apoſtle elegantly and deeply diſcourſeth, Rom. vii. 19.—25. This genius of faith is much to be heeded in its bold addreſſes to the throne of grace.

This boldneſs of faith in this court of grace acts in four.

1. In a free acceſs at all times, and in all caſes. It is a privilege allowed by the Lord to his people, and embraced and improved by their faith. There is no forbidden time, in which we may not come. No ſuch command as in that King's court, Eſther iv. 11. Here it is proclaimed, Pſal. lxii. 8. *Truſt in him at all times*. Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving,*

giving, let your requeſts be made known unto God. There cannot be a more large and comprehenſive account of the matter of allowed addreſſes to the throne of grace, than this. The apoſtle preſcribes prayer as a cure of perplexing care. He hints that every thing that is, or may be the matter of care, may lawfully be made the matter of holy prayer. Turn your care into prayer; and the care will evaporate and vaniſh, and your cure will be felt. Bleſſed be the Lord, that hath made this good in the experience of many, who have gone before him with hearts filled and oppreſſed with many cares, and have returned light and free, and their *countenance no more ſad;* as Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18.

2. The boldneſs of faith acts in free ſpeaking of all the mind to God. This the Greek word in the text particularly points at. Let us come with boldneſs, *free ſpeaking of all our mind; pouring out the heart to him,* Pſal. lxii. 8. *I poured out my complaint before him: I ſhewed before him my trouble,* Pſal. clxii. 2. The tongue is not to be tried at this throne; but all that is on the heart, is to be told to him. He knows it before we tell it, and better than we do; but it is his will, that we ſhould make all our minds known to him. A believer, the better caſe his faith is in, he is the more open and free in dealing with God.

It is recorded of a man, that we ſhould hardly have counted a believer, had not the Holy Ghoſt numbered him amongſt them, in Heb. xi. 32. that *he uttered all his words* (or matters) *before the Lord in Mizpeh,* Judg. xi. 11. So Samuel did, 1 Sam. viii. 21. *And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearſed them in the ears of the Lord.* It is a great favour that the Lord allows us ſo to do. This is not after the manner of men. It would be counted a troubleſome impertinence, to vent all our thoughts, and caſes, and concerns, to a creature; but we may do ſo to the Lord.

Lord. When David refrained his ſpeech, and kept ſilence, it went badly with him, Pſal. xxxii. 3.

3. This boldneſs of faith acts, and ſhould act, in familiarity with God. Believers ſhould come to the throne of grace, not as *ſtrangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God*, Eph. ii. 19. Our Lord, in his directing us to pray, bids us begin with, *Our Father, who art in heaven.* The Spirit of adoption helps to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. When faith ſpeaks rightly this word, and fixeth on it, all other deſires will ſweetly follow. *Abba* and *Amen*, uttered in faith, are the might of prayer. Strangers know not what familiarity the Lord expreſſeth to his people, nor how much familiarity he allows them to uſe with him. It was a great word of a great ſaint many years ago in this land, when dying in a bright ſhining of the Sun of Righteouſneſs on his ſoul, "Tell it to the people, "preach it at my funeral, That God dealeth fami-"liarly with men."

4. This boldneſs of faith acts in importunity at the throne of grace. This importunity is nothing but the ſtiffneſs and tenacioufneſs of faith. Faith ſometimes (and then it is beſt) will neither be beat back by delays from God, nor by inward challenges; but when it hath got hold of God, it will keep its hold. Our Lord ſpoke ſeveral parables to direct and encourage to this importunity: Luke xviii. 1,—8. that of the unjuſt judge and oppreſſed widow; and Luke xi. 5,—8. We muſt underſtand parables warily. No importunity did ever, or can ever prevail with God, to do that for us, or give that to us, that he hath no mind to do or give. All he doth and gives, is in love. Yet he puts his people on importunity in aſking, as if he were unwilling to give; when indeed it is that they may be more fit to receive, and that he may give the more. Thus Chriſt tried the woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 22,—28.

So

So much for the firſt thing, What is the boldneſs of faith allowed and commanded in approaches to the throne of grace?

II. *What grounds are there for this boldneſs?*

There is need of great and ſolid ones to beat up this frame. And, bleſſed be God, we have ſuch.

1. The gracious diſcovery made to us of God in Chriſt. This is, as it were, the eſſence of the throne of grace. The Father's name declared by the Son, John xvii. 25, 26. It is utterly impoſſible that there can be any lawful boldneſs in approaching unto God, unleſs we know this name, and take up this diſcovery of God. Many profeſſors buſy their minds and heads with general notions and names of God; as that he is *gracious, merciful, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, forgiving iniquity.* All good names of God. But is he not *juſt, and a hater of iniquity; holy, and of purer eyes than that he can behold it?* But the main inquiry is little thought on, Where ſhall we find the benefit of all the comfortable names of God, and eſcape the harm of his awful names? It is all in this bleſſed name, *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, Eph. iii. 14. If you approach to God out of Chriſt, you run into a conſuming fire. Here is the ground of the believer's boldneſs: The God he ſeeks, and before whom he comes, is revealed to us as Chriſt's Father, and ours in him; John xx. 17. *Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God.* Bleſſed be the words, and the ſpeaker of them? and happy is the believer of them. Faith cannot ſtand ſtrong without the remembrance of them. They are *my brethren*, for all their fainting, and forſaking of me: I count and call them ſuch, though I be entered in part into my glory. Tell them whither I am going, and where they are henceforth to ſeek me; and how to call on and worſhip the Father, as *mine* and *theirs*, and *theirs* becauſe *mine*.

2. Another ground of boldneſs, is the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. But this being the third thing in the text, I leave it to its proper place.

3. The interceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt in his people, is a great ground of boldneſs. They have not only Chriſt making interceſſion for them at the right hand of God; but they have the *Spirit himſelf making interceſſion in them, and for them*, Rom. viii. 26, 27. A ſpecial ſcripture; that I would remark five things from, relating to this purpoſe. 1. Who is the aſſiſter of believers in prayer? *The Spirit itſelf*; as alſo he is called as to his witneſſing, ver. 16. And the word points at the immediateneſs of his aſſiſtance. 2. What this aſſiſtance is applied to? *Our infirmities*; infirmities in ourſelves, and in our prayers; as the apoſtle declares, *We know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought.* The communion of the Holy Ghoſt is only with believers, for he dwells in them only; and his communion with them is only with his own new creation in them; and becauſe this, as in them, labours with infirmities, his care is about them alſo. 3. The way of his helping, is in the original hinted: *He helpeth with us*, or *over-againſt us*, as a powerful aſſiſtant to the weak, in bearing a heavy burden; as Col. i. 29. *Whereunto I labour, ſtriving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* It is in vain to expect the Spirit's aſſiſtance in work we neglect, or againſt infirmities we indulge and comply with. 4. What this aſſiſtance is? *Making interceſſion for us*, ver. 26, 27. and that *according to the will of God.* How can a believer but prevail, who hath the blood of the High Prieſt ſpeaking in heaven, Heb. xii. 24. and the Spirit of Chriſt crying in his heart on earth, Gal. iv. 6.? The voice of the Spirit is the beſt thing in our prayer; it is that God hears and regards. 5. But, *laſtly*, How doth this aſſiſtance and interceſſion work in us? *With groanings which cannot be uttered.* What! only *with groanings?* We would think it ſhould be, that he aſſiſts with piercing cries

that

that might reach heaven, with ſtrong arguments that cannot but prevail, with mighty force and power that cannot be reſiſted. Is all this great preamble of *the Spirit itſelf helping our infirmities, and making interceſſion for us according to the will of God;* is all this come to a poor unutterable groaning? How ſtrange ſeems this to be! Yet how ſweet is it! Some groanings are ſo ſmall, that they cannot be uttered; for the believer hardly feels them: ſome groans are ſo great, that they cannot be expreſſed; as Job xxiii. 2. *Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my ſtroke is heavier than my groaning.* Sometimes *the Spirit of grace and ſupplications* is a Spirit of liberty and enlargement unto Chriſtians in prayer; ſo as they can, by his help, pour out all their hearts to God, and plead ſtrongly: ſometimes he is a Spirit of groaning, working only ſenſe of want, and breathings after ſupply. There is more of the Spirit in a ſenſible groan, than in many formal words of prayer. The Spirit is called *the Spirit of faith*, 2 Cor. iv. 13.; and *the Spirit of grace and ſupplication*, Zech. xii. 10. Join both thoſe names together: he is *the Spirit of faith in prayer*, or *the Spirit of prayer in faith*, Rom. viii. 15. The Spirit of grace belongs to the throne of grace; and his aſſiſtance doth give boldneſs to believers. The more you feel of his help, pray the more boldly.

4. The covenant of grace gives boldneſs to believers in their coming to the throne of grace. The covenant of grace, as well as the Spirit of grace, belongs to the throne of grace. Dying David had that ſight of this covenant, that gave conſolation to him under ſad reflections: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Although my houſe be not ſo with God; yet he hath made with me an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things, and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire, although he make it not to grow.* Let us conſider ſome properties of the promiſes of this covenant, (for the covenant of grace is a *covenant of promiſe*, Rom. ix. 4. Eph. ii. 12.),

12.), that do give juſt ground for the boldneſs of faith in coming to the throne of grace.

1*ſt*, The exceeding greatneſs of the promiſes. They *are exceeding great and precious promiſes that are given to us*, 2 Peter i. 4. When a believer looks within, he ſeeth great and manifold wants and neceſſities; that he hath nothing, and wants every thing. Some have thought, that they wanted more grace than ever any ſinner did; yet never any wanted more than is in the promiſes. There is ſurely more grace in the promiſes, than there is want in the creature. Creature wants cannot exhauſt God's fulneſs of grace; and all this fulneſs is in the promiſes. There is more of grace in the promiſe than there can be of ſin and miſery in the man that pleads it. Take heed how you compare your neceſſities with the fulneſs of the promiſes. Nothing can you need, but a ſupply is promiſed. Study your hearts and God's covenant, and you will quickly find it to be ſo. We may aſk any thing; for God hath promiſed every thing, Pſalm lxxxiv. 11.

2*dly*, The freeneſs of the promiſes gives boldneſs at the throne of grace. That they are promiſes of a covenant of grace, proves they muſt be free. A free promiſe is a bond given merely from the heart and proper motion of the promiſer, without any motion or motive from the party to whom it is made, except it be that of his miſery, that grace works on. If the promiſes were not purely free to us, there could be no boldneſs of pleading of them. See how the Shunamite pleads with the prophet Eliſha, 2 Kings iv. 28. *Did I deſire a ſon of my lord? did I not ſay, Do not deceive me?* As if ſhe had ſaid, "It was not at my de-"ſire, but of thine own motion, thou didſt promiſe "me a ſon: and I did not fully believe it at firſt: but "now the ſon promiſed is dead." So may the believer plead: "Lord, I did not aſk of thee a promiſe "of grace and glory. I was ſinfully contented in, and "with my natural loſt eſtate; and thou didſt call me, "and quicken me with thy promiſe: wilt thou not

"make

"make out thy promiſe?" The freeneſs of the promiſe is the firmeſt foundation of boldneſs in pleading its performance. No other promiſes, but free ones, are in the covenant of grace; and no other pleading of them but as free, is allowed to them that come to the throne of grace. If thou be for merit and worth in thyſelf, go elſewhere; there is no place for ſuch proud rich folks at this court.

3*dly*, The ſureneſs of the promiſes of the covenant of grace, is another ground of boldneſs at the throne of grace. They are *the ſure mercies of David*, Iſaiah lv. 3. Sure, becauſe *of grace*: Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it* (the promiſe, or the inheritance promiſed) *is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promiſe might be ſure to all the ſeed.* A promiſe is made for faith; (would ever God or man promiſe, but to be believed?) faith is given for, and acts on the promiſe; (believing without a promiſe, is dreaming). A promiſe made by the *God of all grace*, 1 Peter v. 10. to ſinners void of all grace, to give all grace to them, muſt be a promiſe of grace: the believer of this promiſe muſt, and can have nothing in his eye, but the grace of the promiſer. Now, ſaith Paul, it is this grace of the promiſe and promiſer, that makes the bleſſing promiſed *ſure to all the ſeed*. Again, the promiſes of God are ſure, becauſe they are his, Heb. vi. 17, 18.; promiſes ſworn for putting an end to the ſtrife of unbelief. Balaam was a bad man, and therefore called a *mad prophet*, 2 Peter ii. 16; yet, by the over-ruling Spirit of God upon him, ſpoke truly and highly, Numb. xxiii. 19. *God is not a man, that he ſhould lye; neither the ſon of man, that he ſhould repent: hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not do it? or hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it good?* All God's promiſes are ſure, becauſe they are his promiſes that cannot lye. And they are yet farther *confirmed of God in Chriſt*, Gal. iii. 17. So that the believer, in his pleading of God's promiſes, may lay down this concluſion; I want indeed great and many bleſſings; but

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I want nothing, I aſk nothing, but what he hath promiſed who cannot lye, and what is confirmed in Jeſus Chriſt, *the Amen, true and faithful witneſs.* Believers fail greatly in their neglect to quicken and ſtrengthen their faith, by taking up the promiſes in their full extent, fulneſs, freeneſs, and certainty. It is always found, that faith is weak, when the promiſes are mean in our eyes: but if the promiſe appear, and ſhine in its glory, as God's faithful word; then faith is aloft, and acts ſtrongly. Hence it is, that all ſtrong believing gives glory to the promiſes, Rom. iv. 20. and weak faith reflects on him, Pſal. lxxvii. 8, 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? doth his promiſe fail for evermore?* Alas! it was the good man's infirmity to ſay and think ſo, ver. 10. But from his arguing I obſerve, that where faith is feeble, a man thinks the promiſe fails; (as a giddy man thinks the rock he ſtands on, ſhakes and reels, when all the ſhaking is in his head or legs); and when he thinks the promiſe fails, he thinks the promiſer is changed from what he was when he made it. And it borders on blaſphemy, to rob God, by our unbelief, of his glorious attribute of unchangeableneſs. If you have a mind to believe, keep ſtill the promiſe in your eye; if you would believe ſtrongly, view the promiſe narrowly and ſteadily. The promiſe is both the father and mother of faith; it both begets faith, and feeds it. Your firſt believing is from the power of the promiſe; and the continued and growing life of faith, is by ſucking and drawing nouriſhment from the breaſts of the promiſe.

5. Another ground of the boldneſs of believers in their approaches to the throne of grace, is, their privileges that they are poſſeſſed of. So the apoſtle argues, Heb. v. 19, 20, 21. to *drawing near with full aſſurance of faith*, verſe 22. Some of theſe I ſhall name, with this caution, That though all believers have them, yet all do not know they have them; and therefore all do not uſe them as they ought, and would

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if they knew them to be theirs. But all ſhould therefore labour to know them, that they may uſe them to the glory of the giver, and to the comfort and edification of the receivers.

1ſt, The firſt of theſe privileges, is election. And juſtly it is called the firſt: for nothing can be before it; for itſelf is before time; and all that they afterwards receive, flows from it. Election is that eternal and adorable act of free grace, wherein God the Father paſſed over his love to a ſelect company of mankind, that were to come into the world; appointing them to ſalvation; appointing a Saviour for them, and all means fit to accompliſh his deſign of love on them, to the praiſe of his grace, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. This bleſſing is revealed in believing. When God gives faith, he makes known his electing love; and when we act faith, we may ſee it. Faith is *the faith of God's elect*, Tit. i. 1. This, when ſeen, is a great ground of boldneſs at the throne of grace: Luke xviii. 7. *Shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?* This our Lord prays upon in John xvii. 9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world; but for them which thou haſt given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* As if our Lord had ſaid, "I am ſure to be heard; for I pray for them that "are partakers of thine everlaſting love. They are "thine by election, and given to me; they are mine, "by receiving and redeeming of them." We are bid *give diligence to make our calling and election ſure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. They are ſure in themſelves, and ſure to God; but we ſhould make them ſure to ourſelves: and many Chriſtians ſmart ſadly by neglecting this diligence.

2dly, The gift of Chriſt for us, is a great privilege that gives boldneſs at the throne of grace. So the apoſtle argues, Rom. viii. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, (you may ſee who this *all* are, ver. 28, 29, 30.) *how ſhall he not*

with

with him alſo freely give us all things? As if he had ſaid, "It is a ſmall thing to God to give us all other "things, when he hath given his Son. We receive "now many bleſſings, bleſſed be the giver; we have "greater things in the promiſe than we yet receive, or "can yet receive; but ſhall ſurely receive in his time: "yet all we get, and ſhall to eternity receive, is far leſs "than the gift of Chriſt." It is like our Lord had reſpect to this in that word to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 10. *If thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is that ſaith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldſt have aſked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* If ſhe had known Chriſt as the well of ſalvation to ſinners, ſhe would have employed him, and ſhould have been accepted of him. But here many Chriſtians ſtick: they doubt not but Chriſt was given for his church and people, but they know not how to apply this to themſelves. If I knew, ſay many, that Chriſt was given for me, I would then come boldly to the throne of grace, and aſk any thing confidently. I anſwer, None can know that Chriſt was given for them, till they come unto him: and all that come to him, may know that he was given for them, and ſhould believe it. He was given by the will of the Father, and his own, for his elect. This is a ſecret hid with God. He comes to men in the goſpel, offering himſelf, and all his purchaſe and fulneſs, to all that hear it. He that hath his heart drawn forth to like this bargain, and accepts by faith of the Saviour, and of his great ſalvation, hath poſſeſſion thereof immediately; and by that may come to know, that it was deſigned for him in God's purpoſe of love. So Paul, Gal. i. 14, 15, 16. he was one of the holieſt and moſt religious Jews in their church; and yet was at the ſame time one of the moſt wicked young men in all the country: a very hypocrite, a proud ſelf-juſticiary, and a bloody perſecutor of Chriſt and his church. Yet of this wicked creature it is here ſaid, that *God had ſeparated him from his mother's womb*; and Acts iv. 15. *He*

is

is a choſen veſſel unto me; I will pour out of my grace upon him, and will do much for him, and by him. When did all this break out? *When he called me by his grace, and revealed his Son in me.* Then he can ſay, Gal. ii. 20. *He loved me, and gave himſelf for me;* and again, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all true acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners.* All ſay ſo: but had he any mind of thee? and haſt thou any ſhare in his coming to ſave ſinners? Yes, ſaith he, *of whom I am the chief.* He came to ſave me the chief of ſinners. Any ſinner may come after me, and expect mercy at Chriſt's hand, when Paul hath ſped ſo well, ver. 16. He hath made me a pattern of his mercy, for the encouragement of all ſinners that have a mind for a good turn from Jeſus Chriſt.

3*dly*, The privilege of actual reconciliation, and of being brought into a ſtate of grace, is a ground of boldneſs in coming to the throne of grace, Rom. v. 9, 10.; where the apoſtle having ſhewn God's love in giving Chriſt to the death for us, ver. 8. he adds the bleſſings that flow from this gift; *juſtification by his blood*, and therefore *much more ſalvation from wrath through him* ver. 9.; and *reconciliation to God by his death*, and therefore *much more ſalvation by his life*, ver. 10. The improvement he makes thereof, is in ver. 11. *And not only ſo, but we alſo joy in God*, (the original is, *we glory or boaſt in God*,) *through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have now received the atonement.* A ſtate of grace, is a ſtate of boldneſs. All that are in it ſhould, and all that know they are in it will uſe boldneſs of faith at this throne of grace, Rom. v. 1,—6.

6. The experiences of believers are a great ground of boldneſs. *Experience works hope*, Rom. v. 4. The experience of others, as well as our own, is of great uſe herein. Sometimes we find David improving the experience of others for the ſtrengthening his own faith; ſometimes he offers his own experience

for the comfort of others, Pſal. lxvi. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my ſoul.* Becauſe David was in diſtreſs of conſcience, and got peace and pardon, Pſal. xxxii. 1, 6. *For this ſhall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayeſt be found.* Pſal. cxix. 74. *They that fear thee, will be glad when they ſee me; becauſe I have hoped in thy word.* There is no Chriſtian that hath not experience. As he hath a ſoul that needs much to be done for it, ſo the Lord doth much for all he ſaves. And becauſe the Lord dealeth variouſly with his people, therefore there is much difference in their experiences. Yet becauſe all believers are members of the ſame body, and receive all from the ſame head, Jeſus Chriſt, there is ſome ſkill and capacity in every Chriſtian to underſtand, and to be profited by the experience of any Chriſtian. Hence it is, that communicating of experiences is a Chriſtian duty, and a good part of the communion of ſaints. But there is much Chriſtian prudence requiſite in the diſcharge of it. Let no man boaſt of a falſe gift, and pretend to that he hath no ſenſe of; nor talk vainly and proudly of what God hath done for him. All true experiences are acts of grace from God felt on the ſoul. And grace is humbling; 1 Cor. iv. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? Now, if thou didſt receive it? why doſt thou glory, as if thou hadſt not received it?* Three queſtions confounding the pride of men and Chriſtians.

Of theſe experiences that ſhould give boldneſs in coming to the throne of grace, I ſhall name three.

1*ſt*, The experience of the firſt viſit of grace, is a good ground of confidence in aſking any bleſſing of God. Can you remember when you were dead in ſin, and had no thought of grace, nor of thy need and want of it, but waſt well content with thy loſt ſtate; and that, in this ſtate, grace came from this throne, and did beſet thy heart, and overcome it?

May

May you not argue, If the Lord ſought me out, and found me in my departing from him, and ſtopped me, and turned my heart towards himſelf; may not I come now confidently, and aſk mercy and grace? It is a matter of great uſe to believers, to keep up a ſavoury remembrance of the gracious change that preventing grace wrought upon them. Paul could never forget Chriſt's firſt viſit to him, but ſpeaks of it before kings and rulers, and people, Acts xxii. 26. He remembers time and place, and every circumſtance. I ſay not that Chriſt's firſt viſit is ſo ſenſible to all, or (it may be) to any, as it was to Paul. But Chriſt's work of grace may be known by itſelf, even when ſome circumſtances of time, and place, and outward means, are not known.

2*dly*, The experience of the Spirit of prayer, and of anſwers of prayer, is a great ground of boldneſs of faith. I join theſe two together, for the Lord uſually doth ſo: Pſal. cxvi. 1, 2. *I love the Lord, becauſe he hath heard my voice and my ſupplications. Becauſe he hath inclined his ear unto me, I will call upon him as long as I live.* Have ye not known, that ſometimes you have been *ſo troubled, that you could not ſpeak?* as Pſal. lxxvii. 4.; that your hearts have been ſo bound up, and ſtraitned, that you could ſay nothing, and do nothing, before the Lord; but ſit as dumb and oppreſſed, all dark above, all dead within, and all doors ſhut upon you; you durſt not neglect prayer, and you could not perform it? and have you not quickly found the two-leaved gates caſt open to you, your hearts enlarged, and your mouth wide open in aſking? The remembrance of ſuch experiences ſhould ſtrengthen the confidence of your faith. Have you not known what the anſwer of prayer is? that *he hath prepared your heart, and hath cauſed his ear to hear?* as Pſal. x. 17. Come the more boldly at all other times. They are triflers in prayer, that know nothing of God by the name of *hearer of prayer*, Pſal. lxv. 2. *They that ſow in tears ſhall reap in joy.*

Whoever hath gone forth weeping, bearing (and ſowing) *his precious ſeed, hath doubtleſs come again rejoicing, bringing his ſheaves with him*, Pſal. cxxvi. 5, 6.; and ſhould therefore ſow in hope.

3*dly*, The experience of communion and fellowſhip with God, is a great ground of boldneſs in coming to the throne of grace for more. Such as have moſt of this bleſſing, deſire moſt earneſtly more of it, and may deſire it the more confidently, 1 John i. 1, 2, 3, 4. Surely we have this fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Chriſt Jeſus; and we would fain have you ſhare with us therein, that your joy may be full. This communion with God is a myſtery, undoubted to him that taſteth it, and ſurpaſſing all the delights of ſenſe or reaſon; incredible and unintelligible to all that have it not. *A ſtranger intermeddles not with this joy*, Prov. xiv. 10. It lies more deep, than that any eye of fleſh can ſee it. It is of that nature, that only taſting can declare its tranſcendent ſweetneſs: Pſal. xxxiv. 8. *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good.* Saints feel much of it, they talk much of it, the word is full of ſuitable and ſavoury expreſſions of it; yet all are riddles and dark parables to them that experience it not. You that know what it is; though you cannot expreſs it, yet you can reliſh and underſtand ſome ſound words about it. Yet know what it is to be brought near to him, and to have the clouds and vails, that are either on your hearts, or on his face, ſcattered, and the light of his countenance lifted up upon you, Pſal. iv. 6, 7. You have been ſometimes ſo in the mount, as to think, O, how good it is to be here! You have known what the warm and healing beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs upon you are, Mal. iv. 2. You have taſted that in his company, that hath made the puddle of the world's wells of comfort lothſome and unſavoury: yea, as hath made you groan in this tabernacle, and long to be in at that complete and uninterrupted communion above, whereof all your taſte on earth, is but a ſmall earneſt and firſt-fruits.

And

And may not, ſhould not ſuch come boldly to the throne of grace?

APPLICATION. Is there an allowed boldneſs in coming to the throne of grace? Then let us uſe this boldneſs. Alas! many come doubtingly and diſcouragedly. Their unbelief is ſo ſtrong, and their faith ſo weak, that they not only come without this boldneſs, but think that they ought not to come with it, but with a frame contrary to it. They think, that it is true humility, to come with a fear, that is inconſiſtent with this boldneſs. It is indeed required, that men ſhould come before the Lord with awful fear and reverence, and that they ſhould judge themſelves unworthy and undeſerving, both of the privilege of coming, and of the leaſt of the bleſſings they come for. Yet the boldneſs of faith is not prejudiced thereby. I ſhall therefore anſwer ſome of the common pleas of unbelief, as to this privilege, and its improvement.

Object. 1. Is from conſcience of ſin and guilt, grounded ſpecially on theſe two ſcriptures, Pſal. lxvi. 18. and 1 John iii. 20. This plea ſeems to be ſtrong, and to juſtify or excuſe doubtings in Chriſtians; and doth uſually mar the due ſenſe of this duty, of coming boldly to the throne of grace. To remove it therefore, conſider, that ſin affects the heart and conſcience two ways. 1. It defiles the conſcience. 2. It diſturbs it.

1. Sin defiles the conſcience: Tit. i. 15. *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conſcience is defiled.*

But we muſt ſee when and how the conſcience is defiled by ſin. Conſcience is God's tribunal in every man. It is an active and awful power in men, judging of themſelves, as to their ſtate and actions, as they think God judgeth of them. So that there are two main cauſes tried, and to be decided, at this court of

of conſcience, 1. *Am I at peace with God, and he with me?* And this is only truly reſolved, when conſcience pronounceth as God declares in his word. And that declaration is, That every man by nature, and as in the firſt Adam, is an enemy to God, and God to him; and that every one that is in Jeſus Chriſt by faith, is a child and friend of God, and God is at peace with him. The anſwer then is different, if according to truth. Some may, but will not conclude their ſtate of enmity, by their not believing on Jeſus Chriſt; ſome may, but dare not conclude that they are at peace with God, though they cannot deny their faith in Jeſus Chriſt. 2. A ſecond cauſe is about particular actions: and the queſtion then is, *Is this, or that, or the other action, pleaſing or diſpleaſing to God?* And this is to be determined by the light of conſcience, acting: according to God's holy law. For God is the only Lord of conſcience, and his will the only rule and law of conſcience. Conſcience therefore may be three ways defiled.

1*ſt*, By the unpardoned guilt of a natural ſtate, as it is in all unbelievers. Nothing can *purge the conſcience, but the blood of Chriſt*, Heb. ix. 14. An unbeliever doth not apply to it, nor apply it to himſelf, and God applies it to none but by faith. Therefore all ſuch unbelievers have all the lothſome filth of their natural ſtate lying on their conſciences, defiling it. *The anſwer of a good conſcience towards God, is by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. All unbelievers conſciences can ſpeak nothing towards God, by any thing Chriſt hath done or ſuffered; for they know him not, and are not in him. They would give an anſwer, or make their plea, from their good works and honeſt meanings. But all ſuch anſwers and pleas are rejected by God, in his judging of a man's ſtate. For all God's judgments of men's ſtate proceed on theſe two, in Chriſt, or out of Chriſt. And as it is with them with reſpect to one or other of theſe two, ſo do men ſtand or fall before God's judg-

judgment whatever the judgment of their conſciences be.

2dly, Conſcience is defiled by ſinful actions known to be ſuch. Now, if theſe be loved, and delighted in, they do juſtly mar confidence; neither can any man in this caſe draw near to God, but with the mouth, and hypocritically, Iſa. xxix. 13. This is a frame not to be found in a believer. He may be guilty of known ſin, but it is not delighted in. To this David's words refer, Pſal. lxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* It is not, *If there be iniquity in my heart;* for *who can ſay, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?* Prov. xx. 9. It is not, *If I ſee iniquity in my heart*; for where there is leaſt ſin, it is beſt ſeen. Paul ſaw enough, Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. and groaned under it; and yet bleſſeth God through Jeſus Chriſt for the hope of victory. But it is only, *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, (if I look kindly on it), *God will not hear me.* And indeed the man in this caſe cannot pray. It is as impoſſible that a perſon approving and loving ſin, can make a real approach to God, as it is for a man to depart from, and approach to one, at the ſame time, and with the ſame motion.

3dly, The conſcience is defiled by doubtful practice. Of this the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. viii. 7. *And their conſcience being weak, is defiled.* To this belong alſo the words in Rom. xiv. 5. *Let every man be fully perſuaded in his own mind;* and ver. 22, 23. *Whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin.* In deliberate actions, eſpecially of worſhip to God, to act without a clear warrant from the word of God, defileth the conſcience.

2. Sin diſturbs the conſcience. And conſcience is diſturbed by ſin, two ways. *1ſt*, When the evil and filth of ſin is ſeen, a man lothes himſelf therefore. No defilement on the conſcience diſturbs it, till it be ſeen. Men like ſwine wallow in the puddle, and ſee no filth therein, till God open the eyes of their conſciences. *2dly*, When the danger of ſin is ſeen, and the

the wrath it deſerves is perceived, then perplexing fears, and ſenſible ſorrow, works in the ſoul. Now, what is the courſe ſuch a poor creature ſhould take? The ſin is committed, the guilt is contracted, the conſcience is defiled, the defilement is ſeen, diſturbance and trouble is felt in the conſcience; what ſhould ſuch a ſick ſoul do? Will any ſay to him, Waſh thyſelf where thou canſt, and caſt away the burden of thy ſin the beſt way thou canſt, and then come to the throne of grace? This would be a ſtrange goſpel indeed. We know no other courſe a man ſhould take in this caſe, but coming to the throne of grace, to have the conſcience ſprinkled with the blood of Chriſt, the only cordial for a diſturbed conſcience, and the only purger of a defiled conſcience. Therefore Peter was quite out in his prayer; he prayed backward, when he ſaid *Depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord*, Luke iv. 8. Were ever thoſe words uttered at the knees of Jeſus Chriſt? He had ſaid better, if he had prayed, "Lord, come near to me, and abide with me, and "let me ever abide with thee: for I am a ſinful man. "Where can a ſinful man be better, than with the "Saviour of ſinners?" But Peter's prayer is the natural prayer of every man that ſeeth his ſinfulneſs, and is ignorant of Jeſus Chriſt. The publican underſtood prayer, and plied it better, Luke xviii. 13. when he ſaid, *God be merciful to me a ſinner.* "I feel my "ſinfulneſs, I ſee my mercy, Lord, let them meet; "and thy mercy ſhall be glorified, and I ſaved." Whoever therefore are diſtreſſed with the guilt of ſin in their conſciences, or with the power of it in their hearts and lives, muſt ſeek all their relief at this throne of grace. It is only the power of that grace revealed and diſpenſed at this throne of grace, that is too hard for ſin, and all its powers. And for any man to think to ſubdue ſin, except by the power of this grace; or to think that he ſhall have this powerful grace, without coming for it to the throne of grace, is to dream to his own deſtruction.

Object.

Object. 2. I am in the dark about my intereſt in God and Chriſt, and therefore I cannot come boldly to this throne. If I did know that God was at peace with me, and I reconciled to him, and juſtified, then I might come boldly.

Anſ. 1. Whoſe fault is it, that thy intereſt in Chriſt is not put out of queſtion? Were Chriſtians more in ſelf-examination, more cloſe in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this ſhameful darkneſs and doubting would quickly vaniſh. It is a thing to be heavily bewailed, that many Chriſtians have lived twenty or forty years, ſince Chriſt called them by his grace, yet doubting is their life; they doubted when they began, they go on doubting, and many die doubting, when the blame is juſtly to be laid on themſelves. There is an aſſurance of faith, that is a duty, as well as a bleſſing, Heb. x. 22. And were it more minded as a duty, it would be more often attained as a mercy. That aſſurance of faith I preſs you to have, ſtands in firm and ſtrong believing. The faithful promiſe of Chriſt in the goſpel, is the foundation of it. And the ground will bear all the weight we can lay on it. This aſſurance is not only a bleſſing that comes down from heaven, but it may, by his bleſſing of means, ſpring up out of the ſoul; I mean, it may ſpring out of the lively vigorous actings of faith. The great believers we read in the word, the confidence of their faith roſe up to that height and ſtrength that we admire, from a clear perſuaſion of the truth of the promiſes, and of the faithfulneſs of the maker of them. So it is ſaid of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21. *He ſtaggered not at the promiſe of God through unbelief; but was ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully perſuaded, that what he had promiſed, he was able alſo to perform.* And leſt any ſhould think, that becauſe the man was ſingular, and the caſe ſingular, therefore ordinary believers may only wonder at it,

and not attempt to imitate it; the apoſtle adds, ver. 23, 24. *Now it was not written* (in Gen. xv. 6.) *for his ſake alone; but for us alſo*, &c. As if the apoſtle had ſaid, "You ſee what ground Abraham had "for his faith; how ſtrongly he built upon it, and "how pleaſing that was to God. You have the ſame "ground; build ye alſo upon it by faith, and that "faith in you will be as pleaſing to God." Abraham had God's promiſe to build upon. In this promiſe there was its outward part and external. And this was an offspring of his body by Sarah, and the land of Canaan for an inheritance. The ſpiritual and main thing in the promiſe, was Jeſus Chriſt the Saviour, and the bleſſing of eternal ſalvation in him. This was Abraham's goſpel: Gal. iii. 8, 9. *And the ſcriptures foreſeeing* (that is the author of the ſcriptures foreſeeing) *that God would juſtify the heathen thro' faith, preached the goſpel before unto Abraham, ſaying, In thee ſhall all nations be bleſſed. So then they which be of faith, are bleſſed with faithful Abraham.* His goſpel and promiſe was of Chriſt to come, and of ſalvation by him. Ours is the promiſe of ſalvation in Chriſt come already, *delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification*, Rom. iv. 25.; that is, impriſoned for our debt, and ſet at liberty for our diſcharge. Now, conſider, how Abraham improved this promiſe. He had nothing elſe in his eye, he would conſider nothing, but the promiſe, and the faithful and mighty promiſer. So muſt we. When we give place to conſidering of ourſelves, our ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs; when we conſider the greatneſs of the bleſſings in the promiſe, how far they are beyond our deſerving, how many things there be that do make it incredible to reaſon that we ſhould ever receive, or that God ſhould ever give ſuch great things to us, faith muſt be at a ſtand. It is as incredible to an awakened conſcience, that God ſhould juſtify a ſinner, as it was to reaſon, that Abraham ſhould have a ſon by Sarah. Our only way is, to conſider

ſider the promiſe. God hath ſaid it, and he will perform it, and I will believe it. If all the angels in heaven, or faithful men on earth, had ſaid, that God will ſave me from ſin and wrath by Jeſus Chriſt; that ſuch a vile creature as I am in myſelf, ſhall be accepted in that beloved, I durſt not believe it. But when God himſelf hath ſaid ſo, why ſhould I doubt it? God's promiſe in the goſpel deſerves our higheſt truſt and confidence; and ſuch as view it in all its grace, truth, and power, will pay it that due.

Anſ. 2. Suppoſe thy want of clearneſs as to thy intereſt in Chriſt, and that it is thine own fault; may you not come boldly to the throne of grace for ſatisfaction therein? If you know not who is your Father, may you not come to him to know it? There are many worſe prayers made than this, That the Lord would make manifeſt his own work in you. *Lord, help my unbelief*, was a believer's prayer. Complaining of doubtings and darkneſs, and praying for light and clearneſs, hath often diſpelled the clouds, and brought the ſoul under a bright ſun-ſhine.

Anſ. 3. Direct truſting on God, when ſaints have been in darkneſs as to their intereſt in him, is required and commanded in the word, Iſa. l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walketh in darkneſs and hath no light? Let him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God.* What had the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22,---28. but direct truſting? Chriſt was ſilent to her firſt crying upon him; when the diſciples crave an anſwer for her, Chriſt tells her and them, that he was not ſent for ſuch as ſhe; when ſhe comes and worſhips him, ſaying, *Lord, help me*, he anſwers her humble believing prayer with reproach. Yet all ſhakes her not; but by faith ſhe relies upon Chriſt, and makes an argument from this very reproach. And bleſſed was the iſſue.

Object. 3. What ſhould a man do that never came to the throne of grace before? I can underſtand how

a believer may, and ſhould come boldly. It is no wonder that a poor beggar go boldly to that door, that he hath been often at, and was never ſent empty from. But can, or may a poor ſinner come boldly, the firſt time he comes!

Anſ. 1. It is granted, that uſually firſt approaches to the throne of grace are feeble and weak, and not with that confidence of faith that believers do grow unto by experience, and exerciſe of faith.

Anſ. 2. Yet a man may come boldly at the firſt time. There is a good ground for it. 1. Conſider the text, *Let us come boldly, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace.* Who can, or ſhould put in for theſe bleſſings; more than he that never yet got any! Do receivers come to receive daily more grace and mercy; and may not one utterly deſtitute and needy, beg ſomewhat of his mercy and grace! 2. Conſider the ground of this boldneſs lies fair and equal to all that will uſe it in coming. To name only now the promiſe of God: This is laid before all men in the goſpel. Have you a hand of faith to lay hold on it? That makes it yours. God's promiſe is as ſure and true before we believe it, as after. Believing adds nothing to the ſureneſs of the promiſe. Our believing is like a drowning man's catching and laying hold on a rope thrown out to him; his laying hold on it makes not the rope ſtronger, yet it makes the rope his defence. The promiſe is equally true before believing and after believing; but it is no man's known property, till it be believed. The cords of ſalvation are caſt out in the goſpel to multitudes; yet moſt periſh, becauſe they do not lay hold on them. No man can ſink into hell, that holds the promiſe of ſalvation by the arm of faith. 3. Conſider how the Lord directs, Jer. iii. 19. *But I ſaid, How ſhall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleaſant land, a goodly heritage of the hoſt of nations?* That is dreadful indeed, when God makes ſuch a queſtion. Who can anſwer the Lord's queſtions, but himſelf? *And I ſaid, Thou ſhalt call me, My Father,*

Father, and ſhalt not turn away from me. A moſt bleſſed anſwer to a dreadful queſtion. Ver. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* An intereſt in God by Chriſt is offered and promiſed to all in the goſpel; plead it by faith, and it is yours.

3. We find inſtances in the word, (and the like the Lord can make again), of great confidence in ſome at their firſt coming to the throne of grace: As the blind man, Mark x. 46,---52. He only heard of Chriſt's paſſing by: he ſtaid not for Chriſt's calling him, but *began, to cry out, Jeſus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. When many charged him to hold his peace, he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.* "Chriſt was never in my way before, "and he ſhall not paſs now without ſhewing mercy "on me, if crying may prevail." And that his crying was in faith, Chriſt witneſſeth, ver. 52. In all appearance, the woman of Canaan was never at the throne of grace before, Matth. xv. 22,---28. at leaſt, never at Chriſt's feet before: yet ſhe managed her firſt addreſs with that confidence, that ſhe not only got her deſire, but that high commendation with it, *O woman, great is thy faith.* So the centurion, Mat. viii. 5,---10. But above all inſtances, is that of the believing thief on the croſs, Luke xxiii. 40,---43. Never had the throne of grace ſo little to encourage an addreſs to it, as when the King of grace was dying on the croſs. Never had a ſinner leſs encouragement to come to the throne of grace, than when the Saviour was nailed to one tree, and the ſinner to another. Marvellous faith! a dying ſinner, dying for his ſins, employs a dying Saviour for ſalvation, *Lord, remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom.* How little did Chriſt nailed to, and dying on the croſs, look like a King? How ſtrong was the man's faith to believe, that Chriſt, through death, was going to his kingdom? and that Chriſt's gracious thought of him would ſave him? *And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Verily I ſay unto thee,*

thee, To-day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe. As if our Lord had ſaid, "This is thy firſt and thy laſt ad-"dreſs to me, verily it ſhall be heard." Believers do not think how pleaſing to the Lord, large and high thoughts of the ſufficiency, fulneſs, and freedom of the grace that is in Jeſus Chriſt, are. Believers ſhould *deviſe liberal things, and by liberal things they ſhall ſtand*, Iſa. xxxii. 8. Let a believer aſk, and think on the warrant of the promiſe, as much as he can; the Lord is *able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we aſk or think, according to the power that worketh throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Eph. iii. 20, 21.

SERMON V.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

IT is God's great and wonderful mercy, that ever there was a throne of grace erected and revealed, and that he makes ſuch a proclamation as this in his word, *Let all men come boldly to it.* I have ſpoken unto two things in the text. 1. Of the throne of grace, to which we are invited to come. 2. Of the boldneſs allowed in coming to it.

HEAD III. The third thing follows to be ſpoke to, *the ground of this boldneſs*, implied in this *therefore*. And we muſt look back to ver. 14, 15. for the finding

finding the force of this *therefore*. The words are, *Seeing then that we have a great High Prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion. For we have not an High Prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin. Let us therefore come boldly*, &c.

The doctrine I am to handle from this inference of the apoſtle is to this.

Doct. *That the main ground of all the boldneſs allowed in coming to the throne of grace, is in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

The intereſt, and room, and place, that Chriſt hath in this throne of grace, is the ground of all allowed boldneſs in coming to it. When people are ſecure, nothing is more commonly practiſed by them, than fearleſs ruſhing into God's preſence. Any carnal careleſs ſinner can, when he will, bow the knee, and make that he calls a prayer to God. But when conſcience is awakened, and light darts in to make them know ſomewhat of God, and of themſelves, it is then found a matter of wonderful myſtery and difficulty, to perceive any thing that can juſtly and ſufficiently ſupport the confidence of a ſelf-condemned ſinner, in his approaches to God for mercy. Hence it is ſo often ſeen, that this is the common way of all the ungodly, and of ſuch as are ignorant of God in Chriſt. While they are ſecure, and blind, and hardened, they feel nothing, and fear nothing: but when death and judgment approach, and ſtare them near in the face; and when they begin to think in earneſt, that they muſt ſtand before God, and receive their eternal doom, being ignorant of a Mediator, and quite eſtranged from any believing imploying of him, they ſink in diſcouragement and deſpair. And, alas! how many miſerable ſinners are there, that are never awakened

wakened out of the ſleep of ſecurity, until they are plunged in the very pit of deſpair?

The reſolution therefore of this queſtion, How a ſinner may draw near to the throne of grace with confidence, ſo as he may be welcomed by him that ſitteth on it, and may receive good things thence? is only in this, that this boldneſs is all in and by Jeſus Chriſt. My work therefore at this time (and it is indeed the main work of miniſters at all times) is, to declare and ſhew you, *how our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the ground and foundation of true confidence in coming to God.* And herein I would lead you to ſuch things that concern the Lord Jeſus as are commonly known, uſually talked of, but rarely duly pondered and improved.

1. Let us conſider the perſon of this Mediator by whom *we* may *have acceſs with boldneſs*, Eph. iii. 12. A wonderful perſon! the Son of God made man; a marvellous man; by whom all men may be accepted with God, when there is not a man in the world that can be accepted of God in his own name: yet all that come in Chriſt's name are accepted. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is God's own Son, the Son of God tabernacling in the fleſh; *God manifeſt in the fleſh; the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon*, Heb. i. 3. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, and the man Chriſt Jeſus; who gave himſelf a ranſom for all, to be teſtified in due time*, 1 Tim. ii. 6, 7. In due time it will be ſeen, what this ranſom was paid for, and for whom: for every one of the ranſomed ſhall get their liberty and inheritance in God's time and way. People commonly profeſs the faith of this truth, That our Mediator is God and man. But how little is it improved by faith? We do not *conſider him*, how great a perſon he is, and how fit for us, Heb. iii. 1, 2. Such as have any ſerious thoughts of God, and of themſelves (and they are in a forlorn ſtate that have none), find a neceſſity of a Mediator, when they conſider the ſtrictneſs

ſtrictneſs of his juſtice, and the power of his wrath, the perfect purity and holineſs of his nature, compared with the ſinfulneſs and vileneſs of their own nature, hearts, and lives. But there is another deeper thought of God, that will diſcover as great neceſſity of a Mediator; and that is of his greatneſs. *With God is terrible majeſty;* with God is unſearchable glory. How can there be a bold and acceptable approach to him of whom we cannot frame a right ſuitable thought? How is it avoidable, but that all our worſhip muſt be to an *unknown God?* for *no man hath ſeen God at any time*, John i. 18. Here comes in the Mediator Jeſus Chriſt; who is not only a ſcreen betwixt juſtice and us, but is a glaſs wherein we may behold the glory of God. This glory is only to be beheld in the *face or perſon of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. All other views of God's glory are either confounding, or but vain unprofitable notions. All the ſpeculations of the Pagans, that poliſhed the dim light of nature; and all the curious ſtudies of ſome called Chriſtians, about the nature, being, properties, and attributes of God, are nothing but pretty pieces of philoſophy. There is nothing of ſound theology in thoſe thoughts, unleſs they be all ſtinted, limited, directed to, and determined by that diſcovery that God makes of himſelf to us in and by his Son Jeſus Chriſt. The mediation then of Jeſus Chriſt, is not only an argument which, and on which we may plead with God; but it is the mean by which only we muſt approach to God, and the light wherein we ſee, and know ſavingly the God we worſhip. He knew the way beſt, who is *the way to the Father*, and ſaid, *No man cometh to the Father but by me;* and did anſwer Philip's weighty and very natural deſire, *Shew us the Father, and it ſufficeth*, thus, *Have I been ſo long time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me, Philip? He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father: and how ſayeſt thou, Shew us the Father?* John xiv. 6, 7, 8, 9. They all worſhip an idol, or wander in a perfect maze

and labyrinth, that ſeek God out of Jeſus Chriſt. No where elſe is he to be ſought or found, but as a conſuming fire. God of old put his name at Jeruſalem; to it they muſt come with their ſolemn ſacrifices; when afar off, they muſt look to it, as Dan. vi. 10. When they are bid *remember the Lord afar off*, it is added *and let Jeruſalem come into your mind*, Jer. li. 50. Now, Jeruſalem, temple, altar, holy of holies, mercy-ſeat, prieſts, ſacrifices, &c. were all but ſhadows of Jeſus Chriſt. Under the new teſtament, when Chriſt is come, the name of God is in him, and all the worſhip and approaches are to be made to God dwelling in this *true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man*, Heb. viii. 2.

2. Let us conſider our Lord's office of High Prieſt. So the apoſtle calls him *our great High prieſt*, and *we have him*, ver. 14. This is a great ground of boldneſs in dealing with God, that we have Chriſt for a High Prieſt. He was of God's own chuſing and calling. He is not of our chuſing, but he is for our uſing. Should that man be called a Chriſtian, who hath no uſe for this great High Prieſt? *High prieſts were taken from among men, and ordained from men in things pertaining to God*, Heb. v. 1. Conſider the honour of this office to Chriſt, and its uſefulneſs to his people. *He glorified not himſelf to be made an High Prieſt; but he that ſaid to him*, ver. 5. Chriſt's offices of King and Prophet carry viſible plain glory in them. But to be made an High Prieſt, eſpecially when he is to be both prieſt, altar, add ſacrifice, ſeems to have no glory, but abaſement. But if we look to the inſide of this office, it excels in glory. What inconceivable glory is it to Chriſt, to be the reconciler of all things, to take up ſo honourably the grand quarrel betwixt angry heaven and ſinful earth, to *purge our ſins by* the ſacrifice of *himſelf*, and then *ſit down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high?* Heb. i. 3.; to offer a ſacrifice, in the virtue whereof an innumerable company, out of all nations, tongues, and languages, are redeemed,

deemed, and juſtified, and glorified: for which he ſhall be eternally praiſed in heaven, by all the happy inhabitants of that bleſſed place! Rev. v. 9. As for the uſefulneſs of this office to his people, I ſhall only name two things. 1. In this office he manageth all our buſineſs with God; ſuch as we could never have done ourſelves; and, muſt be eternally undone, if it were not done for us: to ſatisfy juſtice, fulfil the law, and bring us in a ſure title to the inheritance of heaven. 2. By him we offer all our ſpiritual ſervices, and have them preſented by him for acceptance, Heb. xiii. 15. We muſt do all *in his name*, Col. iii. 17.

3. Let us conſider what our Lord did when he was on earth, and thence we have great ground for confidence in coming to the throne of grace. This the apoſtle hath in his eye, ver. 15. and chap. v. ver. 7. Two things I would take ſome notice of on this point. 1. He had the ſame things for ſubſtance as errands to the throne of grace that we have. 2. That he did ply the throne of grace as we ſhould. Only permitting this, that there is but a likeneſs in what he did to what we ſhould do at the throne of grace; and that likeneſs conſiſtent with manifold differences, as we ſhall regard.

1ſt, Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt had the ſame things, and the chief of them, that are to us errands to the throne of grace. I ſhall inſtance in ſome of them, and anſwer an objection.

(1.) Our Lord had affliction for an errand, and more of it than any of his people. He was afflicted; yea, *ſmitten of God and afflicted*, Iſa. liii. 4. *He was oppreſſed and afflicted*, ver. 7. *If any man be afflicted, let him pray*, James v. 13. When Chriſt was afflicted, he prays.

(2.) Our Lord was deſerted. Bleſſed be his name for it. We ſhould rejoice, that he had not a life without clouds. The bittereſt and ſaddeſt deſertion that ever a believer was under, is nothing to what

Chriſt met with when he cries out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* None are ſo much to be pitied as a ſaint under deſertion. When affliction is heavy and preſſing, if all be clear above, though there be clouds round about, yet if the Lord ſmile from heaven, a Chriſtian's caſe is not much to be pitied. But if all be dark about, and the darkeſt of all clouds on the amiable face of God, this is the extremity our Lord was in. Yet he prayed, and in his agony prayed yet more fervently. Deſerted believers, take comfort in a deſerted Saviour. His deſertion was penal, yours but medicinal. Though it be bitter phyſic, it is of the great Phyſician's preſcription; and he can and will bleſs it, and make you bleſs him, both for the phyſic and the cure.

(3.) Chriſt had temptation as an errand to his Father: *In all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin*, ver. 15. O that Chriſtians would learn to behave themſelves under temptation, in ſome meaſure, as Chriſt did! Temptation to Chriſt was a far other thing than it is to us. Temptation is bad to us, becauſe of the danger of it; therefore he bids us, *Watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation*, Matth. xxvi. 42. when he was in the depth of his agony. But temptation to Chriſt was a mere affliction. There were never but two ſinleſs men in the world, the firſt and ſecond Adam. Satan came to both. When he came to the firſt Adam, he found nothing of his own in him; but he quickly got ſomewhat put in him, and left it with him, and in him and all his poſterity. When he came to the ſecond Adam, he found nothing in him, and could put nothing in him by temptation, John xiv. 30. The holier a ſaint be, and the more groſs the ſin be he is tempted to, and the more hatred he have of the ſin, the greater is his trouble in and by the temptation. What affliction then muſt it have been to Chriſt to be ſo tempted as he was? Matth. iv.

(4.) Our Lord had the charge and burden of ſin on

on his ſoul, not upon his conſcience: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Iſa liii. 6. And was not that a mighty load? Senſe of ſin is the greateſt diſcouragement to believers. But never was there a man out of hell, or in it, that had ſuch a load of ſin on him as Chriſt had. *His own ſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Law and juſtice charged Chriſt ſeverely; and exacted more of him, than ever they did of any other perſon. None but *Chriſt was made ſin*, 2 Cor. x. 21. Men are ſinners by nature, and increaſe their ſinfulneſs by their life; and an inexhauſtible fountain of ſin is in their heart, Eccl. ix. 3. But none of them is, or can be made ſin. *He* only *that knew no ſin, was made ſin.* And becauſe he was made ſin for us, he was alſo *made a curſe for us*, Gal. iii. 13. The law curſeth the ſinner, but cannot make a ſinner a curſe for others: it can, and doth make him accurſed, and a curſe for himſelf. Here is heaven's art: all the righteouſneſs we are made, flows from *Chriſt's being made ſin for us*; all the bleſſings we get, ſpring out of *Chriſt's being made a curſe for us.* Believers, learn where to ſeek and find true righteouſneſs, and the true bleſſing. In vain are they ſought any where but in Chriſt, and in his being thus *made ſin*, and *a curſe for us.* The Lord Jehovah charged Chriſt with this debt of his people's ſins, and he could not deny the debt. Though he contracted none of it, yet he undertook as ſurety to anſwer for it, and to diſcharge and pay it. Therefore the law and juſtice exacted it of him, abated him nothing. Becauſe the law will have blood and life for ſin, Chriſt offers, and gives his. Our Lord Jeſus had no challenges in, nor burden upon his conſcience; yet he had a heavy burden upon his ſoul: therefore he had a *troubled ſoul*, John xii. 27. though a quiet conſcience. For trouble of conſcience properly flows from the ſight and ſenſe of committed ſin; but Chriſt's trouble of ſoul was from the ſenſe of wrath, for the charged and imputed ſins of others.

Object.

Object. But, may a poor believer ſay, Chriſt knew not what a body of ſin and death was, he knew not what a bad heart is; and theſe I feel, and am diſcouraged by.

Anſw. Chriſt did not know theſe things indeed by feeling and expiation as you do; but he knew them better than you do, or can. 1. Chriſt knew them by the wrath due to them. He that paid the debt, knew beſt the debt that was contracted, though he himſelf did not contract it. He knew how dear the expiation was for the ſin of your heart and nature. 2. Chriſt knew it by temptation. Temptation brought ſin as near to Chriſt, as it was poſſible it could be brought to a ſinleſs man. Some ſaints know ſome ſins only this way. There are ſeveral acts of wickedneſs that the Lord reſtrains his people from, before their converſion ſometimes, and uſually after it. Thoſe ſins they know not by the committing of them, nor it may be by any ſpecial inclination to them; yet they may know them to be dreadful evils, by an external temptation to them, and by the ſight of their ſin and miſery that wallow in them.

2*dly*, As our Lord Jeſus Chriſt had many errands to the throne of grace, ſo he did ply that throne. Our Saviour was a praying Saviour. He ſpent whole nights in prayer to God his Father. *As he was, ſo ſhould we be in the world*, 1 John iv. 17. Are we afflicted, and ſhould we pray? So afflicted Jeſus prays. Is our ſoul troubled, and do we pray? So Chriſt did, John xii. 27. Are we deſerted and pray? So did our Lord. But here is a depth too deep for us to wade in; how our elder brother, how God's own Son in man's nature, did plead at the throne of grace. This throne he plied, was not the ſame we come to. To us he ſits on the throne himſelf, and therefore it is a throne of grace to us. We approach to God in Chriſt, and in Chriſt's name. Chriſt came in his own name, and needed no mediator. We find he came to his Father frequently, earneſtly, and confidently.

The

The church of Chriſt owe him eternal praiſe for that prayer, John xvii. which is only properly Chriſt's prayer. That in Matth. vi. 9.—13. is a pattern of our prayer taught us by Chriſt: but this is the prayer made by Chriſt; and therefore truly the Lord's prayer. Of Chriſt's praying the apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. v. 7. *Who in the days of his fleſh, when he had offered up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears, unto him that was able to ſave him from death, and was heard, in that he feared.* This is a great word. When a poor believer is hanging over hell, and a ſpirit of prayer working in him, how mightily doth he cry to be ſaved from that death? "O "let me not fall in: if ever thou haſt mercy on a "ſinking ſoul, ſave me." But never did a diſtreſſed believer cry ſo mightily to be ſaved from hell, as Chriſt did to be ſaved from death. But that death Chriſt prayed againſt, was another ſort of death than we know, or can fully apprehend. Chriſt prayed with great fervency, and with great confidence. We rarely have them joined in our prayers. If we have confidence of a good iſſue, we are apt to grow cold in aſking. Chriſt knew the bleſſed iſſue of all his diſtreſs, and believed it confidently, Iſa. l. 7, 8, 9. yet prayed earneſtly. He was heard, and knew it: John xi. 41, 42. *Father, I thank thee, that thou haſt heard me. And I know that thou hearеſt me always.* Chriſtians take encouragement and direction to pray, and how to pray, by Chriſt's practice when he was on earth.

4. Let us conſider Chriſt's death for encouraging us to confidence in coming to the throne of grace. This is the main ground of boldneſs in coming: Heb. x. 19. *Having boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of Jeſus.* There is precious blood muſt be ſhed, or we cannot enter; we muſt ſee it by faith, or we dare not venture. We muſt *come to the blood of ſprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. We dare not ſtep one ſtep into God's awful preſence, unleſs we ſee the way marked, conſecrated, and ſprinkled with the Mediator's blood.

How

How ſhall the unholieſt of ſinners venture to come into the holieſt of all, God's preſence? Yes, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, ſuch may, *by the blood of Jeſus*. Let us therefore conſider what this blood of Chriſt doth, and ſpeaks, in order to our boldneſs in approaching to the throne of grace.

1ſt, This blood ſatisfies juſtice, and anſwers all the claims and charges of the law againſt us. What mars boldneſs, like fears of a ſtanding controverſy betwixt heaven and us! God is holy, we are vile ſinners; God's law is ſtrict, we have ſinfully broke it, and deſerve hell moſt juſtly. No anſwer can be given, but by this blood. What would the law have, but Chriſt gave? Would the law have a ſinleſs man to anſwer it, as it was firſt given to ſinleſs Adam? *Lo, I come*, ſaith our Lord Jeſus, without all ſin; a man againſt whom, for himſelf, the law hath no charge or challenge. Would the law have perfect ſinleſs obedience? Chriſt did perform it. Muſt the law have life and blood for every breach of it? Chriſt never broke the law; but the burden of millions of breakers and breaches of it lay on him, and his blood was ſhed for them: and thereby he fulfilled the law, *put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*, Heb. ix. 26.; *finiſhed the tranſgreſſion, made an end of ſin, made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs, ſealed up the viſion and prophecy, and anointed the moſt holy*, Dan. ix. 24. You can never have boldneſs at the throne of grace, unleſs by faith you apply this blood. *Chriſt is ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25. The propitiation is in his blood; faith in it makes it our propitiation.

2dly, This blood, as it is ſatisfying blood, ſo it is purchaſing blood. It is both an atonement and ſatisfaction, and it is a price. It is redeeming blood for perſons, and purchaſing blood for bleſſings. All the bleſſings we come to the throne of grace for, are all bought by this blood. So that we may ſay, that tho we have nothing, and deſerve nothing; yet when we

aſk all things, we aſk nothing but what is well and truly paid for by our Lord Jeſus.

3dly, All the bleſſings purchaſed and bought by Chriſt's blood, are bequeathed to us, and left by him that ſhed it. Chriſt's blood is a teſtamentary bequeathing blood: and believers in their coming to the throne of grace may come as ſuers for the execution and fulfilment of the laſt will and teſtament of our Lord Jeſus. For Chriſt by his death turned the goſpel and new covenant into a teſtament, Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17. His death confirms his teſtament. His laſt will is, that all the bleſſings his blood purchaſed, might be ſecured and laid up for, and in due time given forth to them they were purchaſed for, and bequeathed to. The whole legacy of grace and glory, and all the legatees, are and were well known to the teſtator and executor, (though not to us particularly); and the teſtament will be punctually fulfilled.

So much for the aſſiſtance to faith that Chriſt's death affords. Learn to feed on it. He that cannot make a ſoul meal, and take a ſoul fill of a ſlain Saviour, is a ſorry Chriſtian. A true Chriſtian is a poor ſtarving ſinner, digging in Chriſt's grave for eternal life. There it only is, and there he ſurely finds it.

5. We find further in our Lord Jeſus, (and indeed every thing in and of him helps forward our confidence in coming to God,) that this great perſon the Son of God in our nature, this great officer that lived ſo holily, and died ſo virtuouſly, that he alſo roſe again from the dead. The reſurrection of our Lord is alſo a mighty ground of boldneſs: 1 Peter. i. 3. *Bleſſed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead.* If Chriſt had lain ſtill in his grave, our hope had lain there too; but becauſe he roſe, our hope alſo riſeth with him. So 1 Pet. iii. 21. where the apoſtle hath an excellent ſimilitude. He compares Chriſt to the ark of Noah. All that were

in this ark, were ſaved, and they only; the deluge drowned all the world beſides. They that were ſaved in this ark, were ſaved from drowning in the water, and *were ſaved by water. The like figure whereunto, baptiſm, now ſaveth us*, (Will bare water-baptiſm ſave? No: *Not the putting away the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God*), *by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.* As if the apoſtle had ſaid, "He that by faith hath ſucked in the virtue of "Chriſt's reſurrection, and can by that faith plead it "before God, is a ſaved man. If all the world pe-"riſh in the deluge of God's wrath, this man is in "the ark, and nothing ſhall hurt him." But, alas! Chriſt's reſurrection is looked upon by many profeſſors as a part of goſpel hiſtory and truth, that it is a ſhame for any to be ignorant or doubt of; and therefore they profeſs the faith of it. But they conſider not, that a great part of the food of our ſouls, and of our faith, doth lie in this point of truth. This I would ſhew in three things.

1*ſt*, Chriſt's reſurrection was a demonſtration of the divine dignity of his perſon: Rom. i. 4. *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the ſpirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.* The glorious rays of his Godhead did appear in his word and works; and ſome had eyes to *behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, even when he dwelt among men, John i. 14. But his glory was under an eclipſe till his reſurrection. How ſtately and how ſweetly doth he himſelf expreſs it! Rev. i. 17, 18. *I am the firſt and the laſt*, (high names of a divine eternal perſon): *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.* They that ſaw him dead, could hardly believe he ſhould ever live again; and they that ſaw him alive, had need of faith to believe he had ever been dead. He aſſerts both, and we ſhould believe both. Since death entered into the world by ſin, never was there a man more truly, really,

ly, and fully dead, than the man Chriſt was, who died for our ſins: and there is no man on earth more truly alive, than the man Chriſt is now a living man in heaven. He in his riſing gave proof of his divine power. *He was crucified through weakneſs, yet he liveth by the power of God*, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. There was never ſuch an appearance of weakneſs in the man Jeſus, as when he expired, and lay cold dead in his grave. Never did ſin reign ſo unto death, nor the law's power more appear, than in ſlaying the ſecond Adam. As great, and greater, was the appearance of his divine power in his riſing again: John x. 17. *Therefore doth my Father love me becauſe I lay down my life that I may take it again.* Chriſt died that he might riſe again. He went amongſt the dead that he might riſe from the dead: ver. 18. *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* Chriſt was bid both die and riſe again. Bleſſed be the commander, and bleſſed be the obeyer; for our *everlaſting life is in this commandment*, John xii. 50. Never any but Chriſt had this power of his own life. We muſt yield our life when God calls for it, and till then we muſt keep it; and when that call comes, we muſt obey. We die, becauſe we can live no longer, and becauſe our times are in God's hand. And when it ſhall pleaſe the Lord to raiſe up our bodies at the reſurrection, we receive our life again; but have no power to take it up again, till the powerful word of Chriſt come, *Ariſe from your graves;* and that word gives us our life again. None but Chriſt had power of his own life, both to lay it down, and to take it again. We dare, we can, we ſhould do either; but only obey, and ſubmit to the ſovereign will of our high landlord, at whoſe pleaſure we are tenants in theſe clay cottages.

2dly, Chriſt's reſurrection was a demonſtration of the acceptance of the ſacrifice of himſelf; that the blood he ſhed, and ſacrifice he offered, was ſavoury,

and acceptable with God, that the debt was fully paid and the payment accepted, when the surety was discharged of his prison. Therefore we find it so often written, that *God raised him from the dead*, Acts ii. 24, 32. even when it is said, that *it was not possible he should be holden of death.* Death and the grave are *strong and cruel*, Song viii. 6. They have taken, or will take all mankind prisoners, and are able to keep them: only they took one prisoner, Jesus Christ, who was too hard, too strong, for them. Death had dominion over him but for a little while, and by his own consent, Rom. vi. 9.; but it *hath no more dominion over him.* But he hath dominion over it: *I have the keys of hell and of death*, Rev. i. 18. Courage, believers in, and heart-lovers of Jesus Christ! Death and hell are indeed dreadful jails; but as long as Christ keeps the keys, (and that will be till he *cast them both into the lake of fire*, Rev. xx. 14,) no believer shall ever be locked up in them. If hell were searched never so narrowly, amongst all the condemned prisoners there, no man or woman could be found in it, whose heart there was ever one spark of true faith in, or love to the Lord Jesus, Heb. xiii. 20. *God brought again from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.* Christ is also often said to *rise by his own power.* Christ put forth his divine power in his resurrection: the Father declared his full satisfaction with his undertaking of the work, and payment of the price of redemption, by discharging of him in, and by his resurrection. The angels work was only to roll away the stone; but by his own divine power, his blessed soul did take possession of his dead body; and he did rise up immediately, a truly living man. And this he did by his Father's leave and will; and the angels served only as serjeants and officers, to unlock the prison-doors of the grave: for Christ could easily have removed the stone by his own power, as he did greater things in his resurrection. No wonder the apostle Paul

made

made it one of his great aims in Chriſtianity, to *know the power of Chriſt's reſurrection*, Phil. iii. 10. It is not to know the hiſtory of his reſurrection, nor is it to know the myſtery of his reſurrection, but it is to know the power of it. The ſame power that Chriſt raiſed himſelf from the dead by, is put forth (and no leſs is needful) for the raiſing of a dead ſinner. The ſame power that raiſed the Saviour, *dead for ſin*, is needful for raiſing a ſinner *dead in ſin*: Rom. vi. 4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death; that like as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we ſhould alſo walk in newneſs of life*, Eph. i. 19. There is an *exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead*, &c. How loth are men to admit this, that the ſaving quickening of a ſinner requires the ſame divine power that quickened the dead Saviour? All ſaving converſions are the fruits of Chriſt's reſurrection, and of almighty power.

3*dly*, Chriſt's reſurrection is the pledge and earneſt of our reſurrection, and of eternal life. How great things doth Paul build upon it! 1 Cor. xv. He proves our reſurrection from Chriſt's reſurrection. He argues for Chriſt's reſurrection, by enumerating of abſurdities that muſt follow on the contrary; as, ver. 14. *If Chriſt be not riſen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is alſo vain.* Ver. 15. *We* (the apoſtles) *are found falſe witneſſes of God.* Ver. 17. *Ye are yet in your ſins.* Ver. 18. *Then they alſo which are fallen aſleep in Chriſt, are periſhed.* Ver. 19. *We are of all men moſt miſerable. But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.* Ver. 20. *For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead. The firſt Adam was made a living ſoul*, ver. 45. But when he became a ſinner, he became a killing head to all his poſterity, Rom. v. 12. *The ſecond Adam is a quickening Spirit*, and

and gives eternal life to all his ſeed. And he took poſſeſſion of this eternal life in his human nature, and in our ſtead, at his reſurrection. He conquers and ſubdues that death the firſt Adam brought in, and reigns over it by his grace, Rom. v. 21. Chriſtians, would you aſpire after the reſurrection of the dead, as Paul did? Phil. iii. 11. direct all your aims, build all your hopes on Chriſt's reſurrection: *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo*, John xiv. 19. This living head will in a little time have no dead members; with his *dead body ſhall they ariſe*, Iſa. xxvi. 19.

6. Chriſt's aſcenſion into heaven, is a ground of boldneſs in coming to the throne of grace. So in the context, verſe 14. *He is paſſed into the heavens.* This is great ground of faith, that Chriſt is in heaven, and *for us hath entered within the vail*, Heb. xvi. 20. How dare a ſinful man adventure into God's preſence? Becauſe there is a ſinleſs man there, that went thither on purpoſe to mind our buſineſs, who are on earth. No man ever went thus into heaven, and on this errand, but our High Prieſt, John iii. 13. All others go thither to get for themſelves: Chriſt aſcended to get, and to give, Pſalm lxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 8. How kindly did our Lord deal with his diſciples about this, and how hardly were they perſuaded to ſubmit to his going away; He told them whither he was going, and for what; he told them of his returning again, and receiving them to himſelf, never to part more, John xvi. 2, 3, 4. and yet *ſorrow filled their hearts*, John xvi. 6. He again ſaith, ver. 7. *Nevertheleſs, it is expedient for you that I go away.* If you will not be content, becauſe it is neceſſary and fit for me, *I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.* How hard was it to believe this? What was, to all reaſon, more expedient, yea neceſſary, than that ſuch weak ſcholars ſhould have their bleſſed Maſter's company? It was ſo far from ſeeming expedient to them, that they thought they would be ruined thereby: and were very near it, Luke xxiv. 21. Although the matter

matter be not ſo obvious to our conceptions and liking: yet really it is a greater mercy and advantage to us, that we have our glorified Mediator at the Father's right hand, than if we had him preſent with us upon the earth. It is more expedient for us, that he is where he is, than it would be to have him where we are. Poor diſtreſſed believers, they cry for miniſters and Chriſtians to pray with them, and for them: O if they had but one hour of Chriſt's bodily preſence with them, and had him to pray for them, as he did for ſome when he was on earth, what heavenly conſolation would it be to them? Take in by faith the comfort of his being in heaven, and his being as knowing and mindful of you, and as able to help, and that as ſpeedily, as he was on earth, or could be, if he were now on earth with you.

7. *Laſtly*, Our Lord's interceſſion in heaven, is a great and ſtrong ground of confidence in coming to the throne of grace. This is in the context. This is the laſt ground of Paul's triumph of faith: Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea, rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* His faith begins at Chriſt's death, and riſeth out of his grave with him, aſcends up with him at the right hand of God, and concerns itſelf in his interceſſion there. Not unlike this riſing and climbing of faith, is his account of the riſing of grace on the veſſels of grace, Eph. ii. 4, 5. They are *dead in ſins* when grace finds them firſt. The firſt thing grace doth to them, is, to *quicken them with Chriſt*, then *raiſing them up together*, then *ſetting them in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* All our life ſprings out of Chriſt's grave: John xii. 24. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* This heavenly grain, Jeſus Chriſt, muſt be ſown in the earth and die; and

from

from the virtue of that death, all the life of grace and glory grows up in all its branches. He is indeed *the tree of life*, that now *groweth in the midst of the paradise of God*, Rev. ii. 7. And he is the glory of the place, and the eternal food of all the happy inhabitants thereof. But he was once dead in his grave; and grew out of that grave, up to all that glory and dignity that we shall one day be blessed with the beholding of, John xvii. 24. In this his glory in heaven, he intercedes for us. Intercession is a sort of praying, 1 Tim. ii. 1. *Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks*, are commanded to *be made for all men*. We have one sad intercession, Rom. xi. 2. *Elias made intercession to God against Israel*. He was a severe prophet, and had severe service put into his hand. But our great Prophet and High Priest makes no intercession against his Israel, but all for them.

This intercession of Christ, which is so great a ground of boldness to us at the throne of grace, stands in these.

1*st*, In his appearing in heaven, in our nature, and in our name before God; Heb. ix. 24. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are the figures of the true*, (and those were the places of high priests of old entered into), *but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*. He is there, not only for himself, to reap the glorious fruit of his hard work on earth; but for his people, as their head and representative. All the church, the body, is now in heaven itself, because its head is there, Eph. ii. 5, 6. Christians, you are now *lying among the pots*, and defiled with the smoke and soot of this sinful world; you are sometimes *plunged in the ditch*, till *your own clothes abhor you*, as Job speaks, chap. ix. 21.; you cry out, *Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar*, Psal. cxx. 5. Let faith say, "But where is "my Lord and head? Is he not in heaven? in that "glory that I am not able now to bear a view of?

"And

"And he is appearing there, as my nearest and dear-"est friend. I am ashamed to look on myself, and "my lothsome deformity; I am afraid that so foul "and spotted a face as mine should be seen in hea-"ven. But Christ is there, and my Christ is there; "and there he is to appear for me, who must dread "my personal appearance there, if it were not for "this appearance of my head for me." 2*dly*, Christ's intercession stands in this, That he, in our nature, and in our name, presents continually the savour of his sacrifice: Heb. ix. 12. *He went into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* Aaron, and his successors in the office of high priest, were appointed to offer the great sacrifice of yearly atonement at the altar, and with the blood thereof to enter into the holy of holies, and to sprinkle the mercy-seat (their throne of grace) with that blood, Lev. xvi. 13. Our Lord Jesus, the antitype, offered the sacrifice of himself in his death; and, in and with the virtue of that sacrifice, he entered heaven, to sprinkle the highest altar therewith. It is but a fond Popish fancy to think, that there do remain visible marks and signatures of his humbled state, on the glorified body of our Lord Jesus. That is indeed to *know Christ after the flesh*, in a bad sense, 2 Cor. v. 16. But his *entering with his own blood*, is spiritually to be understood; that Christ's appearance in heaven, is to bring up a memorial continually before God, of the virtue and savour of that sacrifice he offered without the gates of Jerusalem: Eph. v. 2. *Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* This savour never spends or wears out. The blood of Jesus, in the virtue of it, in the merit of it, and in the power of it, is as fresh this day, as in the day it was shed on the cross. He is still the new slain *way to the holiest of all*, Heb. x. 20. as fresh and fragrant as ever. If men by their unbelief account it old or

ſtale, and to have loſt its ſavour and virtue to themſelves; and if they will ſeek for ſomewhat elſe to procure them acceptance in heaven; let them try, and periſh: for none can help them that reject Chriſt. But our Lord preſents nothing for the ſalvation of his body, the church, but his own blood; and nothing elſe is accepted in heaven for this end, but that precious blood. And all they to' whoſe conſcience this blood is applied, and who come into it, and feel its virtue and power, will abhor all vain and dangerous mixtures of any thing with this ſovereign balſam. It is always ſavoury in heaven; and it is always ſavoury to all them that are in the right way to heaven. Our Lord, in his interceſſion, fills heaven with the almighty and eternal ſavour of his blood; and heaven is filled with the praiſes of it, and of the ſhedder of it, Rev. v. 9,—12. If its ſavour do not fill the parts of the earth where it is preached, it is becauſe men have loſt (or rather never had) the ſpiritual ſenſe that only can take in this ſavour, and not becauſe this blood is impaired in its virtue. But this is the ſin and miſery of this condemned world, that what is moſt ſavoury in heaven, is leaſt ſavoured on earth; and what is moſt ſought after, prized, and doated on in earth, is vanity and abomination in heaven, Luke xvi. 15.

3*dly*, In Chriſt's interceſſion, there is his knowledge of, and ſympathy with the ailments and diſtreſſes of his people. This the apoſtle takes notice of in ver. 15. His knowledge of their diſtreſſes, we can more eaſily account for, than for his ſympathy. His omniſcience as God we believe. Peter ſweetly owned it, John xxi. 15, 16, 17. O that Chriſt would with power aſk the ſame queſtion at all of you, and that you could give the ſame anſwer! Chriſt's queſtion is, *Loveſt thou me more than theſe?* "Not long ſince "thou ſaidſt ſo, what ſayeſt thou now?" Peter's anſwer is, *Yea, Lord, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* And on the repeating of the queſtion, Peter gives the ſame anſwer, ver. 16. When Chriſt a third time aſked the

ſame

ſame queſtion, Peter was grieved, ver. 17. and anſwers, *Thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* As if he had ſaid, "I dare not compare my "love to thee, with that of others to thee; thou haſt "reaſon to queſtion my love to thee, becauſe of my "late woful denial of thee: but yet I dare call thee "to witneſs, who knoweſt all things, that I do love "thee. Though all my brethren love thee better "than I do, or can; though I be more unworthy than "any, to be loved by thee; yet I am ſure I love "thee." If the love of Chriſt were as a hot fire within, and its *coals were caſting out a vehement flame*, as Song viii. 6. believers would more often call Chriſt by that ſweet name, ſweet to us to ſpeak, and ſweet to him to hear, *O thou whom my ſoul loveth*, Song i. 7. Miſerable ſouls are they who love not Chriſt; and dull unobſervant people are they that know not what, or whom their ſouls love. Is the love of Chriſt a mere notion? Is it not a moſt ſenſible, holy, and ſpiritual paſſion, or rather a heavenly grace! Can men love Chriſt, and not feel it? Should they feel it, and not avow it? Is there any thing we ſhould be aſhamed of in the love of Chriſt, but the ſhameful ſmallneſs of it? that our higheſt and hotteſt love is ſounſuitable a return to his incomparable lovelineſs, and his wonderful love to us, and the dear demonſtrations of it? All ye that love our Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, look on him and love him more; love him with all your ſouls, and bluſh with ſhame that ye love him no better. Blow the coals of love by faith, and let the flame mount up to heaven, and *aſcend ye up in the flame of the altar*, as Manoah's angel did, Judg. xiii. 20. You that doubt of your love to Chriſt, go to him, fall down before him; anſwer Peter's queſtion, according to the true ſenſe of your ſouls, and it will be, *Lord thou knoweſt that I love thee.* Love Chriſt, and ye will quickly feel ye love him. A ſight of Chriſt will beget love, and love will quickly ſpeak for itſelf, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

But for Christ's sympathy with his people, this is harder to conceive, than his knowledge of their distresses. It is a sympathy different from what he had in the days of his own infirmity. It is as tender, but not disturbing; as real, but not afflicting. It is inconsistent with his glorified state, to have any trouble. His sympathy itself is to be believed; the manner how it acts, is unsearchable: Heb. ii. 17. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God.* Heb. iv. 15. *He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* About this deep point of Christ's sympathy we may soberly conceive, 1. Our Lord's remembrance of his own infirmities, temptations, and afflictions in the days of his flesh. This is plain and certain. 2. His sure and distinct particular knowledge and remembrance of his people, and of all that concerns them, within and without. 3. His interest in them, and care of them, and concern for them, as his members. 4. His power and wisdom as their head, to send down vital influences upon them, as their case requires, Eph. iv. 16. Col. ii. 19.

4*thly*, Lastly, Christ's intercession stands in presenting his people, and their desires and wants, to the Father, for acceptance, and answers of peace. Both our persons and our prayers must be presented by this *great High Priest, &c. over the house of God*, Heb. x. 21. or no welcome, no acceptance. An Israelite, though he brought, might not offer the sacrifice on the altar; only the priest; and the high priest only must offer the great sacrifice for all Israel in the day of atonement. Christians must bring themselves, Rom. xii. 1. and all their spiritual sacrifices; but Christ must present them, and we only by him, Heb. xiii. 15. What mighty encouragement is there in this for faith? Our High Priest makes another thing of our sacrifices than we can. Believers often know not rightly

rightly their own caſe; Chriſt knows it exactly. Many of our prayers are mere miſtakes. We complain, when we ſhould praiſe; we aſk what would do us hurt, and are unwilling to receive what would do us much good. Our Lord Jeſus puts all to rights. He can ſay over our prayers rightly, he can make good ſenſe of them, can purge them of their faults, can ſpy out any thing of his own Spirit in them, and laſtly, adds his own incenſe to them, Rev. viii. 3. And thus are they accepted. We may beſt underſtand Chriſt's heart and work in interceſſion, by John xvii. wherein we find three.

(1.) Chriſt conceals all the faults and weakneſs of his people. Not a word of theſe in all that prayer, and they were guilty of a great many. (2.) He tells all their good, and makes much of it; ver. 6, 7, 8. *I have given unto them the words which thou gaveſt me: and they have received them, and have known ſurely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didſt ſend me.* He knew, and reproved them for the weakneſs and ſtaggering of their faith; he foretold an approaching trial, and their fainting in it, John xvi. 31, 32.: yet he knew they were true believers; and he makes much of it in his prayer; as again, ver. 14, 25. (3.) Chriſt declares fully their neceſſity, and begs ſupply for them. No Chriſtians needs any more than a full anſwer of this prayer of Chriſt; and it was put up for all his body, and will be anſwered as to every member of it. Whenever you are upon your knees at the footſtool, remember who is at the throne above, and what his buſineſs is there. Footſtool-ſupplications of believers would be all quite loſt, if it were not for the Saviour's interceſſion at the throne, Heb. viii. 1, Our High Prieſt *is ſet on the right hand of the throne of the Majeſty in the heavens.* And *he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us*, Heb. vii. 25. This is the end of his living in heaven, to make interceſſion for us. Take heed, and mind Chriſt much in your prayers; and never fear his forgetting

getting you. Shall Chriſt live for ever to make interceſſion for you? and will you live all your days without making uſe of him as an interceſſor? Alas! that Chriſt in heaven gets ſo little employment from believers on earth! He ſeeks your employment, he loves it, and loves them beſt that give him moſt of it. He undertakes for every thing put in his hand, and in due time will give you a good account of all you intruſt him with, and make you ſay, *He hath done all things well*, Mark vii. 37.

APPLICATION. Is all the ground of confidence at the throne of grace, laid in Jeſus Chriſt our High Prieſt? Build then your confidence on this ſafe and ſure ground. Not only may you lawfully make uſe of Chriſt's mediation, but you muſt do it. It is not only a privilege the Lord allows you to make uſe of, but it is his command, and your duty to uſe it. You are commanded to come to the throne of grace, and commanded alſo to come in Chriſt's name, and to come boldly in this name. The neglect of either of theſe is ſin. Not to come to the throne of grace when he calls, is a great ſin. To come to it (or rather to pretend to come) in any other name but Chriſt's, is a great ſin too. And to come in this name diffidently, is to reflect unworthily on Jeſus Chriſt, and the power and virtue of his mighty name: John xiv. 13, 14. *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it.* Can a man deſire a larger promiſe than this? Can one deſire a ſtronger plea than Chriſt's name, and a better hand than his to have our anſwers from? Be ye aſkers, and aſkers in my name, I will be the doer. The Father's glory in the Son, and the Son's glory, is concerned in giving good anſwers to all prayers put up in Chriſt's name. You cannot honour and pleaſe Chriſt more, than in uſing his name confidently. All bills with Chriſt's name at them will be accepted at

at the throne of grace, and will ſurely be anſwered. But coming to the throne of grace in Chriſt's name, is another thing than commonly people take it to be. Some think it enough, that they conclude their prayers with the words Chriſt taught, Matth. vi. but never for that uſe is it oft formally and ſuperſtitiouſly put to. Some think, that it is only to ſay in their prayers, *for Chriſt's ſake.* To aſk in his name, is a higher buſineſs, than to be reached by unbelievers, and men void of the ſpirit of God. If *no man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt*, 1 Cor. xii. 3.; if praying be required to be *in the Holy Ghoſt*, Jude, ver. 20.; if *praying always with all prayer and ſupplication*, ſhould be *in the Spirit*, Epheſ. vi. 18.; *how ſhall men call on him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. x. 14. But can you take the ſearcher of hearts to witneſs, that you build all your hopes of acceptance at the throne of grace, in this name and mediation of Jeſus? that thou durſt no more ruſh into God's awful preſence, without the protection of this great name, than thou durſt leap into a devouring flame? Can ye ſay, "I have no name to come "to God in, but Chriſt's. My own name is abomi-"nable to myſelf, and deſervedly hateful in hea-"ven. No other name is given under heaven, but "that of Jeſus Chriſt, in which a ſinner may ſafely "approach to God. Since the Father is well pleaſed "in this name, and the Son commands me to uſe it, "and the Holy Ghoſt hath broke this name to me, "and made *it as an ointment poured forth*, Song i. 3. "and ſince its ſavour hath reached my ſoul, I will try "to lift it up as incenſe to perfume the altar and "throne above. Since all that ever came in this name "were made welcome, I will come alſo; having no "plea but Chriſt's name, no covering but his borrow-"ed and gifted robe of righteouſneſs. I need no-"thing, I will aſk nothing but what his blood hath "bought, (and all that I will aſk); I will expect an-"ſwers of peace, and acceptance, only in that bleſſed

"Beloved;

" Beloved; beloved of the Father, both as his Son " and our Saviour; and beloved of all that ever ſaw " but a little of his ſaving grace and glory?"

Let ſuch go and proſper. The Lord is with you, the Lord is before you. He will welcome the Mediator in his *bringing you to him*, 1 Peter iii. 18. and welcome you with ſalvation, who come in his name for it. The prodigal's welcome, Luke xv. is but a ſhadow of what ye ſhall meet with. Chriſt welcomes dearly all that come to him; and the Father welcomes the believer that cometh in Chriſt's name, and is brought in Chriſt's hand, to this throne.

SERMON VI.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

FROM this text, I have already ſpoken to three of the things I did take up in it.

1. Unto *the throne of grace* itſelf, that is erected for, and revealed to ſinners in the goſpel; that new court of grace, which the Lord invites the fallen ſeed of Adam to come unto.

2. I have ſpoke to that *boldneſs* that is allowed and commanded in coming to it. We are not only allowed to come, but we muſt come, or periſh, and bring the guilt of our own ſouls blood upon our heads, by refuſing, Acts xviii. 6. We not only may come and try, but we may and muſt *come boldly* and confidently, expecting to ſpeed in our coming.

3. I have

3. I have ſpoke to the great ground of this confidence, couched in the word *therefore*, in the text, and relating to ver. 14, 15. Were it not for Chriſt's place, and buſineſs, and heart in heaven, no man on earth could have boldneſs at the throne of grace.

HEAD IV. The fourth and laſt thing in the verſe, is, *the end we ſhould come for; and the great bleſſings we may receive by coming*; expreſſed in two words, *that we may obtain mercy*, and *find grace to help in time of need*. God's mercy and grace are the moſt comprifing, comprehenſive bleſſings; and theſe expreſſions of them contain all that is needful for our happineſs. Nothing can be added to them; no bleſſing but is in them; no bleſſing is without them. It is the common apoſtolic prayer, (and ſuch prayers made by the penman of the holy ſcripture, under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghoſt, are equivalent to divine promiſes, yea are ſuch), *Grace be to you*; ſometimes, *Grace, mercy, and peace be to you.* So that theſe words, as they ſtand in the text, do equally anſwer theſe two inquiries.

1. *What good things ſhall we get at the throne of grace?* The Spirit of God anſwers, You may, and ſhall *obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need!* And are not theſe well worth coming for? are they any where elſe to be had? And here they may ſurely be found. How ſhould this endear the throne of grace to us, and engage to coming to it?

2. *Wherefore ſhould we come? with what deſign? what end ſhould be in our eye?* Come, ſaith the Spirit, by the apoſtle's pen, that ye may *obtain* the one, and *find* the other. Come, that you may get both. Deſign this getting in your coming.

I would firſt ſpeak of *our coming, that we may obtain mercy*; and on it diſcourſe theſe three things:

1. Of the mercy that is to be got at the throne of grace.

2. Of the import of the phraſe, *obtaining of mercy.*
3. Of the duty required of coming with this deſign, *that we may obtain this mercy.*

I. I ſhall diſcourſe *of the mercy that is to be obtained at the throne of grace.* You ſee it is only mercy that is named, without any mention made, whoſe mercy it is, or of what ſort it is. But when miſerable ſinners are invited to come to God's throne of grace for mercy, it may be eaſily known whoſe it is, and what it is. It is God's mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, who is the mercy-ſeat, or throne of grace. It is not angel-mercy, or creature-mercy; but God's mercy. And who can tell what a great and vaſt thing his mercy is? Mercy, in the proper notion of it, is a kind, relieving compaſſion to the miſerable. The object of mercy, is a miſerable creature. Divine goodneſs ſhines in giving being to nothing, and in creating all things; wiſdom, in ordering them, and guiding them to his glory; juſtice, in diſpoſing of them according to his will, the eſſential rule of righteouſneſs. But mercy hath no fit object, till miſery appear for mercy to act on. The ſhewer of mercy is a compaſſionate perſon; its nature and end is, to relieve the miſerable. Mercy with God is another ſort of mercy than what is required of, and can be practiſed by creatures. We may, and ſhould have compaſſion on the miſerable, whom we are not able nor allowed to relieve. The judge that condemns the criminal, ſhould do it with mercy and compaſſion; but he breaks the law, if he ſuffer his mercy to delay or divert a righteous ſentence and execution. But the Lord's mercy is not only tenderneſs and compaſſion in his own heart, (ſo we borrow words, by the pattern of ſound words in the ſcripture, to ſpeak of God after the manner of men), but it is always relieving to the perſon on whom it is beſtowed. Let the miſery be never ſo great, and of what kind ſoever it be; whoever they be that are the objects of his mercy, they are certainly relieved thereby.

by. There is no redemption out of the pit, though their miſery that are there is the greateſt. Why? Becauſe there is no mercy for them. If it were poſſible that God's mercy in Chriſt could enter into hell itſelf, (as it falls on many very near to it,) that mercy would bring them out. But the door of mercy is quite ſhut upon them; and the Lord hath reſolved and declared, that his mercy ſhall never viſit them.

That we may the better underſtand what this mercy of God is, the getting whereof we ſhould make our great errand to the throne of grace, it will be needful to conſider that miſery in men that renders them needy of this mercy.

And this I would conſider, as it actually lies on them, and is incumbent; or as it is coming on them, and imminent.

1. The miſery that all natural men lie under. It is true, they do not ſee it, nor feel it; but this makes not their miſery the leſs, but the greater. For inſenſibleneſs of miſery, eſpecially where it is removable, and when this inſenſibleneſs is a hindrance of uſing the right means of removing it, is a great plague, and an aggravation of the miſery. I ſhall give you a few ſcripture-accounts of this miſery.

1*ſt*, The miſery of a natural man, and of all natural men, is, that they are utterly deſtitute of all true good: *In me, that is, in my fleſh, dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. Muſt it not be ſo much more with them that are *fleſh*, and *in the fleſh*, and have nothing in them but *fleſh?* the firſt notion we have of miſery is this, that it ſtands in a deprivation of good. And the greater that deprivation be, and the more good things a man is deprived and deſtitute of, the more miſerable we count the perſon to be. He is a miſerable man that is blind; becauſe the light of the world is ſo pleaſant and uſeful, and the eye ſimply needful to behold and uſe it. It is a great addition to this man's miſery, if he be dumb alſo; becauſe the tongue is a man's glory, and the organ of expreſſing

our thoughts, and of communion with our own kind. The miſery is yet farther heightened, if a man be alſo deaf; for the ear is the door of knowledge, both of things natural and divine. If you go to the inward ſenſes or powers; if a man be deprived of thoſe, his miſery is yet greater; as it is a greater miſery to be void of underſtanding and memory, to be an idiot, (an innocent, as we call them), than it is to be deprived of any of the bodily ſenſes. Now, if one wanted all the ſenſes of the body, and powers of the ſoul (if ſuch a creature ſhould be called a man), would we not account this a moſt miſerable creature? But if there be yet ſomewhat better than all theſe, ſurely then he that is altogether void of that, muſt be more miſerable ſtill. That there is ſomewhat better than all theſe good gifts of body and mind, and that every man by nature is without it, is moſt manifeſt in the word. To be *without God, without Chriſt, without hope*, Eph. ii. 12. is more and worſe, than to be without any, or all outward good things. This deſtitute ſtate is expreſſed by our Lord, Rev. iii. 17. *Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* What a great difference is there betwixt Chriſt's, and their opinion of their ſtate? And muſt not Chriſt's be right and true, and theirs falſe if it contradict his? Were they any thing the leſs miſerable; were they not rather much more ſo, that they ſo misjudged? Our Lord aggravates both their ſin and miſery from their ignorance, *Becauſe thou knoweſt not.* Spiritual bleſſings are of that nature, that all are miſerable indeed that are without them; but no man is ſenſibly miſerable, till he ſeeth that he is without them. It is the knowledge of this want that brings in the ſenſe of miſery: as every unpardoned ſinner is a miſerable man; but he never counts himſelf miſerable, till he feel the weight of ſin and ſee the want of pardon.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, Every natural man is needy of God's mercy, becauſe he is a condemned man. A condemned man, is a dead man in law. As *there is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus*, Rom. viii. 1.; ſo there is nothing but condemnation to all that are not in him: John iii. 18, 36. *He that believeth not, is condemned already;* and *the wrath of God abideth on him.* You may have ſeen and heard, how malefactors will cry for mercy from the judge, when he cannot, ought not to pity them, ſo as to ſpare them: when they are bid hold up their hand at the bar to receive their doom, how earneſtly on their knees, with tears, they will cry, *Mercy, my lord, mercy for God's ſake.* Every natural man is condemned. But how few of their conſciences can witneſs for them, that they ever ſought God's mercy? ſo as convict criminals an earthly judge's mercy? The mercy they beg is ſmall, in regard of what ſinners ſtand in need of from God. An earthly judge may reprieve or pardon to-day, and the pardoned man may die to-morrow. But if the great Judge condemn you, and you are not pardoned, you are ſentenced to a never-dying miſery. Priſoners beg mercy of a man, who, may be, is bound up by law, and conſcience of his oath, to ſhew none, but to execute juſtice. Here the caſe is juſt contrary. The Lord bids men beg his mercy, and condemns them only that deſpiſe it. We have his command, and promiſe, and many acts of pardon, for our encouragement. What pleading for pardon would there be at earthly bars, if they had the judge's command to aſk, his promiſe to grant it, and his hand and ſeal to that promiſe? Such is our caſe; yet few beg it in good earneſt. Be aſhamed, and convinced of your ſin, when you ſee men begging a frail, ſhort life of a judge; and ſay, "Alas! I never begged the mercy of eternal life ſo earneſtly at the throne of grace, as theſe wretches do a "frail, ſhort, uncertain life."

3*dly*, The natural man hath all the creation againſt him, and therefore is needy of God's mercy. The whole

whole creation groans under him; he is a burden to God's earth, a plague to the creation, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. What a noiſe do men make, and what pains do they take, to heap up duſt? If God proſper their endeavours, they think he bleſſeth them, and count themſelves happy in their enjoyment. But what is all this for, to a natural unrenewed man? All theſe creature-comforts will be but as ſo many witneſſes againſt them in the day of the Lord, James v. 1,—4. Men ſeek the creatures to ſatisfy their carnal deſires, and ſupply their outward wants; but they do not remember, that unleſs the ſpecial ſaving mercy of God come along with them, the creatures are abuſed, and in their way, witneſs and groan to God againſt them. They groan to be put in God's room in mens hearts, and to be made fuel for mens luſts. They all wait but for God's call to execute vengeance on his enemies. Is not ſuch a man needy of God's mercy, that hath the whole creation of God at war with him?

4thly, But there is worſe than all theſe: The man himſelf, and all he is, hath, and doth, is under the curſe of God, Gal. iii. 10. What is the curſe? It is the malediction of God, on a man: it is God's devoting him to ruin. He is curſed in his body, curſed in his ſoul, curſed in his family, curſed in his trade and eſtate, curſed in his croſſes, curſed in his mercies, curſed in his life, and curſed in his death; curſed in time, and curſed to eternity. Ah, how long and broad is this curſe! Zech. v. 2, 3, 4. O what need is there of God's mercy! for it is this mercy only that can take away the curſe. There is no evil we are in danger of from an angry God, but muſt be removed or prevented by the oppoſite good from a reconciled God. If God's anger be our plague, nothing can remove it but his love. If his curſe be our burden, only his bleſſing can take it away. The whole creation cannot make up the loſs of God's favour. And this they know well, that ever ſaw the face of an angry God.

So

So much of the neceſſity of God's mercy, from the preſent miſery of natural man.

2. I might proceed to ſpeak of that which is coming on them, without the interveening of this mercy of God. We do not reckon a man miſerable only, on the account of what he feels, but alſo on that of his juſt fears. And generally the ſmart of miſery is raiſed from fear, rather, and more than from feeling. If any thing renders a man's preſent ſtate miſerable, the apprehenſion of the duration or increaſe of what he feels, adds greatly to his miſery. Many things would be little complained of as great evils, were a man ſure that in a moment they ſhall be removed. But in a ſinner's caſe, for as bad as it is at preſent, it will ſurely be worſe with him ſhortly, if mercy prevent not. There is certainty of its coming, and an eternal duration of it when it comes. It is called *the wrath to come*, 1 Theſſ. i. 10. Nothing like it ever came on them. Preſent wrath though dreadful, is but a trifle to that that is to come. It is *wrath to come;* for it will ſurely come. As ſurely as God lives, as ſurely as God is true in his word of threatening, this wrath will come on the world of the ungodly. There is no putting of this evil day far away, but in vain thoughts; no diverting or keeping it back a moment. All the united force of the rebellious part of the creation will not be able to ſtem or ſtop this fearful tide of wrath. It is *wrath to come*; for it is ſtill coming and approaching. As many days and years as an ungodly ſinner counts in his life, as many days and years journeys hath God's wrath made towards him. Think on this, old ſinners; God's wrath and you are near to meet, except mercy interpoſe. You think that you run from it, but it runs after you. It will *come upon you, and purſue you, and overtake you*, as Deut. xxviii. 45. It is *wrath to come;* becauſe it is always a-coming, and never paſt. The tide of God's wrath on the damned is an eternal flood; there will never be an ebbing. Look down to hell, and

ſee

ſee how they fare there. Alas! men will not believe and fear, and fly; and therefore muſt feel. How many daily hear of this *wrath to come*, and yet never have any fear of it, till they be irrecoverably plunged into it? who never awaken out of the ſleep of ſecurity, till they are awakened by the flaſhes of hell-fire? who will never believe God's wrath, till they feel it? No true believer goes to hell; all unbelievers are ſent thither: but as ſoon as they come there, they become woful believers, becauſe eternal feelers of this wrath to come.

Mens danger of this dreadful ſtate, ſhould make them cry mightily for God's mercy, as it renders them unſpeakably needy of it. But your own ſerious thoughts about it, would do you more good than many words can.

II. The ſecond thing propoſed, is, *What is the obtaining of mercy?* A frequent manner of ſpeech in ſcripture: 1 Tim. i. 13. *Who was before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy.* 1. Pet. ii. 10. *Which in time paſt were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

This phraſe of *obtaining mercy* ſpeaks forth,

1. That the mercy is God's gift. Our obtaining, is the fruit of his giving. *I obtained mercy*, ſaith Paul, and may every believer ſay. How ſo? He *gave* it; he *ſhewed*, he *demonſtrated* it, as 1 Tim. i. 16. It is the Lord's ſhewing it, tendering, and giving of it, that is the only ſpring of our obtaining it. We do not buy it, we do not work it out, we are no way meet for it but by miſery. God's mercy ſprings not out of the earth, but comes down from heaven. It is the gift of God: and as ſuch muſt all ſeek it that would obtain it; and as ſuch will all eternally own it, that do obtain it.

2. This phraſe ſpeaks forth a particular application of mercy to the receiver by the giver of it. *I obtained*

ed mercy, ſaith Paul. "General mercy would not do "my buſineſs, another man's mercy would not ſave "me; I muſt have it of my own, for myſelf; and ſo I "got it. Mercy came to me, made me a viſit, and "applied itſelf to me in particular." So muſt it be with you. You will never be ſaved, you ſhall never ſee God's face in glory, unleſs his mercy deal with you, and apply itſelf as particularly to you, as if there were no other perſon in the world to be ſaved by mercy beſides thyſelf. There is indeed a bleſſed multitude of the veſſels of mercy, and the *Captain of our ſalvation brings many ſons to glory*, Heb. ii. 10. But yet there is a perſonal particular application of ſaving mercy to every ſaved ſinner. And for this application of mercy, we ſhould come to the throne of grace. Though there be infinite mercy at his throne, and though many receive of this mercy; yet you muſt have of this mercy for yourſelves or you cannot be ſaved. Your ſoul is your own, and no man's elſe; your danger, ſin, and miſery, is your own, and no man's elſe; and the mercy that ſaves you, muſt be as much your own, and not another body's mercy. That deep diſcourſe of the apoſtle looks this way, Rom. xi. 30, 31, 32. *For as ye in times paſt have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even ſo have theſe alſo now not believed, that through your mercy they alſo may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* It is a great myſtery of judgment and mercy the apoſtle is ſpeaking of; the rejecting of the Jews, and calling in of the Gentiles. Mercy took occaſion, from the juſt caſting off of the Jews, to viſit the Gentiles; and will in due time beſtow itſelf again upon the Jews. But both of them muſt have mercy of their own. Mercy to the Jews will not ſave the Gentiles; mercy to the Gentiles will not ſave the Jews. Both muſt have their own mercy. The fountain is the ſame, the ſtreams are the ſame; but the veſſels are not the ſame, and every veſſel of mer-

cy muſt have its own meaſure of its own particular mercy. So muſt it be with you, if you be ſaved by mercy. It muſt be your own, and no man's elſe.

3. *Obtaining of mercy*, ſpeaks forth the receivers poſſeſſing of it. Obtained mercy, is not only beſtowed and applied mercy, but it is poſſeſſed mercy. Such things as cannot be poſſeſſed and kept, are worth little pains in ſeeking. But God's mercy is well worth the ſeeking; becauſe it may be both had by ſeeking, and kept when obtained, and is unſpeakably beneficial when enjoyed: Pſal. ciii. 17. *The mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting upon them that fear him.* As if the Pſalmiſt had ſaid, "Man is but a flower; his life is a wind and vapour "that quickly and ſurely paſſeth away. But it is not "ſo with God's mercy; it eternally abides on all it "falls upon." O that men would think on this! As God lives, and is true in his word, God's everlaſting mercy, or God's everlaſting wrath, will eternally lie upon every one of you. And what an amazing difference is there betwixt theſe two! And yet how many behave, as if indifferent which of theſe two ſhall be upon them? God's ſaving mercy is ſuch a jewel, that though the Lord gives it but to few, yet he will never take it away from any he hath given it to, Pſal. lxxxix. 28,—33. Believers, God may take any thing from you, but his mercy; and you may ſpare any thing, but his mercy. If God come to take away your children, give them; if he come to take away your eſtate, let him have it; if he come to take away your health and lives, yield them; ſtrive not with him; bleſs a giving, and bleſs a taking God. If he crave thy right eye, or right hand, and what is deareſt to you, give, yield all to him. But ſay, "Let me only keep thy mercy; I cannot part with "that, it is the only thing I cannot ſpare." The bleſſed Canaanite's ſtriving with Chriſt was about his mercy: "Be ſilent, diſown, reproach me, I care not; but thy "mercy I muſt have." It were a cruelty that only unbelief

unbelief can charge God ſinfully with, to take away ſo precious a gift as ſaving mercy is. Let but this *mercy follow me*, as Pſal. xxiii. 6. and it is no great matter where I go. If I be in the loweſt hell, mercy will bring me out: Pſal. lxxxvi. 13. *For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou haſt delivered my ſoul from the loweſt hell.* There is no time-hell that a veſſel of mercy can be in, but mercy will bring him out again; and this mercy will ſecure him from the eternal hell. This mercy is God's mercy; therefore ſovereignly free, therefore almighty, therefore eternal. You ſin, believers, when you fear his taking away his mercy. He gave it at firſt, that you might be eternally poſſeſſed of it. Mercy gave mercy, and mercy will keep mercy, and mercy will ſtay with you, and keep you for ever.

III. The third thing to be ſpoke to, is, *the end and deſign of coming to the throne of grace;* and that is, *that we may obtain mercy.* Not only that this mercy is to be got at the throne of grace, and there only; nor that this throne of grace is erected on purpoſe to diſpenſe this mercy; nor is it only that we ſhould come to the throne of grace, to aſk and beg this mercy; but that we ſhould come to obtain it. This is the duty exhorted to in the text. And in the ſetting about this duty, two things are required.

1. Come as ſenſible of your need of mercy. No man can come truly without this ſenſe. He that hath no ſenſe of miſery, compliments God in aſking mercy, and takes this ſaving name of God in vain. It is dreadful to provoke God to wrath in our way of aſking his mercy: and all ſuch contract this guilt, and expoſe themſelves to his wrath, that have no heart-ſenſe of their need of this mercy. It is an amazing ſtupidity that the power of ſin hath brought on men, that, in a world of ſinners ſinking into everlaſting miſery, ſo few are really ſenſible of their need of ſaving mercy.

And no man is ſenſible, till God by his grace make him ſo.

2 Come in faith of his mercy. You cannot come at all without this faith. Faith is *coming to God*, Heb. xi. 6. Unbelief is *departing from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12. No man can come, but he that is ſenſible of miſery; for coming is the act of a man drawn and moved *by the cords of a man*. No man can come but in faith; for there is no other coming for a Chriſtian. Theſe three things ſhould be in this faith.

1ſt, A believing that there is abundance of mercy with the Lord; which if ſhewed and put forth to you, and on you, would ſave you abundantly. So argues the prodigal, Luke xv. 17, 18. *And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my father's have bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh for hunger! I will ariſe, and go to my father, and ſay*, &c. Pſal. cxxx. 7. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* The higheſt working of unbelief is, when men judge their miſery greater than his mercy: the great work of faith is, to get theſe two to meet fairly: and mercy will ſurely prevail. His tender *mercy is over all his works*; much more is his abundant mercy above a ſinner's miſery. Cain's words ſhould be left for himſelf, and uſed by none elſe, Gen. iv. 13. *And Cain ſaid unto the Lord, My puniſhment is greater than I can bear*; or, *My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven*: words ſounding like the language of hell, and not to be ſpoken by any that would eſcape it. I know many ſecure people find no difficulty in that they count believing of this, that there is mercy enough with the Lord. But yet the matter is far otherwiſe. It is mighty difficult to believe the abundance of his mercy, when men are in great preſſures of miſery. The beſt of ſaints have ſometimes ſtumbled here. When Moſes is pleading with the Lord for mercy to Iſrael, Numb. xiv. 17, 19. *And now, I beſeech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according*

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as thou haſt ſpoken. And pardon, I beſeech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatneſs of thy mercy. As if Moſes had ſaid, "Lord thou haſt "proclaimed thy name, and I heard it, and believed "it; but I did not think, that their wickedneſs would "have been ſo great, as now I find it to be." Was not Moſes a great believer? yet he ſtumbled in this point of the power of God's mercy, Numb. xi. 18,—23. Iſrael murmureth for fleſh, God promiſeth a whole month's diet of it. What ſaith Moſes, ver. 21, 22.? How doth the Lord anſwer him? ver. 23. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Is the Lord's hand waxed ſhort? thou ſhalt ſee now, whether my word ſhall come to paſs unto thee, or not.* This great man's unbelief was greatly aggravated, in that he ſaw the Lord bring that people out of Egypt, with ſigns and wonders, and with a mighty hand; he ſaw them daily fed, clothed, and led, and protected with miracles of divine power and mercy: yet one new difficulty ſhakes his faith. When Paul gives us his laſt account of his faith, (for that epiſtle was his laſt writing), he lodgeth his faith on divine power: 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him againſt that day.* "If "I be perſuaded that he is able, I ſhall not doubt of "his being willing to keep that charge ſafe I have "committed to him." Let the eye of faith take up clearly the power of mercy; and the faith of its application to thy benefit, will be the more eaſy. But he is a rare believer, whoſe view of the power of mercy is not darkened by a clear ſight and deep ſenſe of his own great miſery, at leaſt at ſometimes.

2*dly*, To come for mercy in faith, is to believe the fitneſs and ſuitableneſs of God's mercy to our miſery. Here many ſtumble wofully. Their queſtion is, "Am "I fit for mercy?" when it ſhould rather be, "Is his "mercy fit for me?" And this queſtion every ſenſible ſoul can anſwer; the other none in heaven or earth can anſwer. If any man think himſelf fit for mercy,

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of all men, that man is moſt unfit for it, and fartheſt from receiving of it. But every ſenſible ſoul will ſay, "Though I be unfit for, and unworthy of mercy; yet "mercy is very fit for me. Is there a pardoning mer- "cy with God? who is it ſo fit for as a guilty vile ſin- "ner? Is there a ſaving mercy with him? who is it ſo "fit for, as for a loſt man, as I am?" Come to the throne of grace for mercy, in faith of this, "Mercy "is fit for me exactly, though I be utterly unworthy "of it." They that think they are fit for mercy, will never get it, nor indeed can aſk it. But they that think they are needy of it, and that it is fit for them, will both aſk it and get it.

3*dly*, To come to the throne of grace in faith for mercy, is, to believe that there is all good-will in him that ſits on this throne to give and ſhew mercy. It is implied in the text, *Let us come to obtain mercy*. But what if when we come, he will not ſhew mercy? That is an ungodly ſuppoſition, miſchievous to ourſelves, and reflecting upon God. He hath mercy in abundance to give; he delights in giving, he never refuſed mercy to any that came for it, he hath promiſed he never will: and why ſhould men harbour ſuch a ſuſpicion, that we may come and not obtain? Benhadad could adventure on a report, that the kings of Iſrael were merciful kings; and yet Ahab was one of the worſt of them, 1 Kings xx. 31. And ſhall not ſinners come upon a more ſure report, of the mercifulneſs of the King on this throne of grace? It is on this truth of the Lord's good-will to ſhew mercy that our faith ſo readily halts. Many think they ought not to believe this good-will to ſhew mercy. I would have you conſider ſome inſtances of Chriſt's dealing with ſinners. John iv. 10. *Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, If thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is that ſaith to thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldſt have aſked of him, and he would have given thee living water*. Where we are to regard, 1. To whom theſe words were ſpoken by our Lord; To a Samaritan; a vile creature, as to the

the former courſe of her life; a blind, ignorant, ſottiſh ſinner, that was guilty of refuſing Chriſt a cup of water, the greateſt ſin ſhe ever committed in her life. 2. What our Lord ſaith to her: *If thou kneweſt me, thou wouldeſt have aſked; if thou hadſt aſked, I would have given thee living water.* And before he had done he made her know him; made her aſk, and gave her of his living water. But that I mainly obſerve from the word of Chriſt, is a truth, which few will believe when they hear it, even few believers themſelves will believe it as they ought, That Chriſt is more ready to give begging ſinners eternal life, than they can be to give Chriſt himſelf a cup of cold water. Our Lord ſaith it, but men will not believe it. Another of Chriſt's words is in Luke xi. 13. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them, that aſk him?* Chriſt makes the compariſon favourably, ver. 11, 12. of a child's aſking neceſſaries; will a parent refuſe that deſire, and give what is hurtful? But conſider our Lord's deſign in this ſaying. It is plainly to encourage to ſeeking. And the argument he uſeth, is from the greater love and readineſs to God to give the beſt things, than earthly parents have to give their children the neceſſaries of this life. The preference is not here given to God's greater riches and fulneſs, than that of parents, who may have their children beg of them what they have not to give, as in Lam. iv. 4.; but it is a preference given to God's greater willingneſs to give. Now, who believes this, and makes the juſt application to his own caſe? and ſays confidently, "The Lord is much more willing to give me ſaving "mercy, if I aſk it, than I am to give a bit of bread "to maintain the life of the neareſt and deareſt rela-"tion I have in the world?"

APPLICATION. I ſhall only add a few words of application.

1. There

1. There is no principle of natural religion engraven more deeply on the hearts of men, than there is misery in men, and mercy in God; and that God's mercy only can relieve men under this misery. This runs through the whole world in all ages; and will continue as long as sense of misery is in men, and any notions of God are preserved in the minds of men. And these sentiments are not to be defaced. Attempts of atheists are damnable to themselves, but vain efforts against the Rock of ages.

2. Notwithstanding of this, God's true mercy in Jesus Christ is the greatest riddle, offence, and stumbling-block, to all natural men. God's mercy they like well enough, and would have applied to their own relief under misery; but God's only and true mercy in Christ, they cannot away with. That there is no mercy with God for sinners, but what flows thro' the blood of Jesus Christ; that God's love should appear in sending his own Son, under the charge of men's sin, and under the smart and feeling of their miseries; that as God shews mercy only this way; the world never did, never can, never will understand, nor relish it, nor betake themselves to it. They would have mercy to come to them another way; and so seek it, and look for it in vain, and perish by the miss of it.

3. There is no address made to God, more honourable to God, more acceptable to him, and more becoming a miserable sinner, than an address to God for his mercy. It is his glory to be the Sovereign Lord of mercy; it is his honour to be attended with the addresses of miserable men; it is his delight to dispense mercy to the addressors. What is more becoming God, than to shew mercy? and what can be more fit, than that a miserable sinner should beg his mercy?

4. There is no provocation more common, than sinful ways of begging God's mercy. I shall briefly in-

inſtance in a few. Many profane careleſs creatures have this word frequently in their mouths, *God be merciful to me;* who yet have no more ſenſe, either of God or of themſelves, of his mercy or of their miſery, than the ground they go on. This is a groſs taking of God's name in vain. Undue addreſſes to God for mercy, are great provocations. Some beg only outward mercies. Such people would like this text well, if it had been, "Let us come that we may obtain "gold, and ſilver, and health, and long life." If prayer was ordained by God for ſuch mercies, the throne of grace would be crowded with ſupplicants. But you will never ply prayer rightly, till you underſtand that there is ſomething to be got at this throne of grace, that is better in itſelf, more needful for you, and that will do you more good, than all that the world hath to give. Some beg mercy only when they are under God's afflicting hand: Pſal. lxxviii. 34. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him.* Some beg God's mercy limitedly; they only beg one mercy and deſire no more. His mercy is of a large extent, and we ſhould beg it all. We may beg a particular mercy, according to our preſent felt neceſſities; yet we muſt not make an exception againſt any act of mercy. We muſt not beg the mercy of pardon, with a heart-quarrel againſt the mercy of ſanctification. *The Lord be merciful to thy ſervant in this thing,* 2 Kings v. 18. was a faulty prayer, if there was any ſincerity in Naaman. Tho' we may aſk any particular mercy, yet we may lay open our hearts to the whole flood of mercy: Pſalm cxix. 132. *Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou uſeſt to do unto thoſe that love thy name.* So Pſalm cvi. 4, 5. Laſtly, Some beg mercy for themſelves, and for their idols in the ſame addreſs. One part of their prayer is for mercy to themſelves, and another part of it is for mercy to their idols. Is not that a woful, ill-made prayer? and yet how frequently is it done? Idols are ſuch things as have a greater, nearer room in the heart, than God hath.

Whatever is loved, feared, truſted, and delighted in, more than God, that is an idol, be it the beſt or baſeſt thing we can name, or think on. Theſe idols are of two ſorts; lawful, and unlawful. Not that it is lawful to have an idol; but many make idols of lawful things: ſuch things I mean, that in their proper place may be ſought, and lawfully uſed; but are wofully abaſed, when put in God's room. Theſe are the moſt dangerous, becauſe leaſt perceived idols. Chriſtian, it is lawful to love thy relations, to pray for wife and children, to beg God's bleſſing on thy lawful diligence in thy calling: but watch well, that none of theſe lawful things come in between thy heart and God. If they do, thou wilt fall into this ſnare, of begging God's mercy to thyſelf and idols in the ſame prayer. Unlawful idols, or idols in unlawful things, are, ſin, luſt, and heart-plagues. Woe to him that begs God's mercy to them. We ſhould daily beg God's mercy againſt them. The more mercy (that is, forbearance) God ſheweth to ſuch idols, the more wrath, and the leſs mercy, he ſheweth to the man himſelf. God's mercy cannot be ſhewn both to a man and his idols. The pureſt mercy is then ſhewn to a man, when the Lord dealeth ſeverely with his idols. *Kill my ſinful idols, and ſave me*, is a fit prayer at the throne of grace; and he is a happy man that gets it anſwered.

5. Sinful addreſſes for God's mercy, are great provocations of his wrath. His mercy is ſo ſacred a name of God, that he will hold no man guiltleſs that taketh it in vain. In this matter the beſt contract much guilt. All have many ſins in their holy things, and in their approaches to the holieſt of all, the throne of grace, and do ſtand in need of atonement. And we ſhould all come to the throne of grace, for mercy to pardon the ſins that are in our ſeeking of mercy. But where then ſhall the ungodly and ſinner appear? He periſheth for want of mercy. He ſhould come for it; and

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he cannot come for mercy, while he is what he is, but he provokes the Lord to more wrath againſt him. This is one of the inextricable ſtraits that every unbeliever is in, that nothing but ſovereign grace and mercy can bring one out of. Look to him for this deliverance, and he will ſhew you mercy.

SERMON VII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE laſt thing in this verſe is, *What is to be had at the throne of grace, and what we ſhould come for?* And that is, *mercy* and *grace;* and we need no more. And we ſhould come that *we may obtain and find them:* and we ſhould, in our coming, deſign no leſs.

Of the firſt I began to ſpeak laſt day, and did open theſe three things.

1. What is this mercy we ſhould come for? It is God's ſaving mercy in Chriſt, ſuitable unto, and for relieving of that miſery that every natural man is periſhing under. Mercy in God, and mercy in man, are relatives; and happy is that perſon that hath them well married and matched together.

2. What is in this phraſe, *obtaining of mercy?* I told you, that it implied three things. 1. That mercy is God's free gift. We only come by it, becauſe he gives it. 2. That there is a perſonal particular application of this mercy to the obtainer of it. 3. That

it is given as a poſſeſſion; not as a gift that may be recalled and retaken; but it is given for an everlaſting poſſeſſion. Whoever is made partaker of God's ſpecial ſaving mercy, it ſhall never be taken from him. it ſhall never waſte, nor ſpend, nor wear out; but ſhall ſtay with him, follow him, and grow up with him to eternity. The burden of that heaven-like ſong, Pſalm cxxxvi. is ſix and twenty times repeated. *For his mercy endureth for ever.* How ſweetly will it be ſung from all the manſions in heaven, and by all the bleſſed dwellers in them! *O give thanks to our God; for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.* Can you *learn this ſong?* as the word is, Rev. xiv. 3. Only *the redeemed of the Lord* can *ſay ſo;* but all they ſhould ſay ſo, Pſalm cvii. 1, 2. His mercy is moſt ſweet; a crumb of it will ſave a ſtarving ſoul, as Matt. xv. 27. A large meaſure of it on earth, is a heaven. But the eternity of this mercy, is the mercy of this mercy. Time-mercy, in regard of this, are no mercies.

3. I ſpoke of the deſign and end we ſhould have before us in coming to the throne of grace: *Come that we may obtain mercy.*

That which I would do at this exerciſe, is to apply this truth. And the Lord apply both doctrine and application. And,

Firſt, I would put this queſtion to your conſciences, and let them ſpeak as in God's ſight, *Whether have ye obtained mercy, or not?* Can you ſay with Paul, *But I obtained mercy?* You muſt have it as well as he, and may know it as really as he did; though ye receive not ſo much, nor know it ſo clearly, as ſo great a believer as Paul did. See to get your conſciences well reſolved in this main caſe, that you may be able to give a peremptory anſwer. The importance of this queſtion is very obvious. Can a man retire within, and look up to God, and conſider this, "I am a "miſerable ſinner in myſelf, as all are; nothing but "God's ſpecial mercy can relieve me;" and not think it

it is a matter of vaſt conſequence to know whether he hath obtained this mercy or no? Woe to them that never aſked the queſtion; and they are but in a ſorry caſe that cannot anſwer it.

I would propoſe a few things to inforce the duty of trying yourſelves in this matter.

1. It is mercy you have been ſeeking. If ever you made any faſhion of prayer, ſurely it was mercy you ſought. Moſt of you, if not all, pray at leaſt ſometimes. Now, whenever you pray, unleſs you be wofully formal and ſtupid, your conſciences muſt tell you, it is mercy you ſeek. Have you long and often begged God's mercy? and will ye never inquire whether or not you have got it? None aſk in earneſt, but they will try how they ſpeed. There is no ſurer and plainer argument of trifling in prayer, than when men are careleſs what they get by prayer. We would be called of *the generation of them that ſeek God's face:* and ſhall we not inquire if we have found him? Our Lord bids us aſk, that we may receive; and ſhall we aſk, and not think of receiving? nor try if we have received?

2. A great many round you have obtained mercy; therefore it becomes you to inquire, whether you have obtained it. If the mercy of God were ſo very rarely diſpenſed, that none, if any, in any age, did partake of it, this neglect would be a little more excuſeable. But when mercy falls round about thee; when one on thy right hand obtains mercy, and another on thy left hand obtains mercy; when this mercy falls on ſome of the family thou liveſt in, on ſome of the congregation thou heareſt in; when this mercy falls on one that hath the ſame natural parents that thou haſt: will none of theſe things make you aſk, *Have I alſo obtained mercy?* We find our Lord aggravating the miſery of the damned, by their ſeeing of the bleſſedneſs of the ſaved, Luke xiii. 28. *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when ye ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of*

of God, and you yourſelves thruſt out. A moſt dreadful paſſage! Chriſt is telling men that were to be excluded from heaven, what they would think, ſay, and do, in that diſmal caſe. Prevent this miſery in time, by inquiring whether you have obtained mercy: and do ſo the rather, that ye may ſee others partaking of this mercy. When you ſee the ſaving mercy of God ſought and obtained by others, it ſhould provoke you greatly; not to envy them their ſhare, but to deſire a ſhare of your own; for there is enough, and to ſpare. And the Lord doth ſhew mercy to ſome on purpoſe, that he may encourage others to come, and aſk, and obtain. So Paul tells wherefore he got his mercy: 1 Tim. i. 16. *Howbeit, for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt (*or *the chief) Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting.* There were other ends Chriſt had in ſhewing mercy to Paul. The Lord ſhewed him mercy, that he might be ſaved eternally; he ſhewed him mercy, that he might be *an able miniſter of the new teſtament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. and a ſucceſsful apoſtle, 1 Cor. xv. 10.; and the church of Chriſt hath good cauſe now, for many ages, to bleſs our Lord Jeſus for that rich mercy which that choſen veſſel obtained, and was filled with. But the apoſtle, in that place, takes notice of another deſign of Chriſt's in his mercy to him; and that was, to ſet up Paul as a pattern and copy, of the freedom, riches, and power of ſaving mercy. And Chriſt can, when he will, write another copy, like Paul; and ſomewhat like it he doth in all that he calls ſavingly, Eph. ii. 4. Take in this argument, "Many obtain "mercy; and why not I? None deſerve it; yet ma"ny have it. None deſerve it leſs, and need it more "than I; why then not I?" If you ſee the Lord ſhewing mercy to others, and you care not for mercy to yourſelves; how can you expect it, or think you have got it?

3. In-

3. Inquire whether you have received God's ſaving mercy; becauſe this mercy is brought ſo near you, that it muſt either be received or refuſed. There is no midſt. No man doth neither, no man doth both. All that have the offer of God's ſaving mercy in the goſpel, do and muſt neceſſarily either receive or reject it. This ſhould make people inquire the more narrowly, whether they have obtained mercy. If ye have not obtained it, ye have refuſed it: Acts xiii. 46. *It was neceſſary that the word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you: but ſeeing ye put it from you, and judge yourſelves unworthy of everlaſting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* This laſt is a ſtrange phraſe. I am perſuaded in the Lord, that no man ſhall ever get everlaſting life, that thinks himſelf worthy of it. It is always to be ſought by us, always given by the Lord, and always taken by the receivers of it, as an alms of grace for Chriſt's ſake. Nothing ſurely was farther from Paul's mind, than to have theſe fooliſh Jews to count themſelves deſerving of eternal life; or that, on the account either of their privileges or works, they did or could deſerve ſalvation at the hand of God. But all the apoſtle meant, was this:—"Everlaſting life is brought near to you in this word of the goſpel: you put the word from you; thereby you declare, you are unwilling to receive everlaſting life, and God counts you unworthy of the offer of it; and we will carry it to others;" as he tells other unbelieving Jews at Rome, Acts xxviii. 28. *Be it known to you, that the ſalvation of God is ſent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.*

Now, for reſolving of this queſtion, Whether you have obtained ſpecial ſaving mercy, or not? this ſeems eaſily determinable. There is ſo great a difference betwixt that ſtate of ſin and miſery that mercy finds men in when it firſt viſits them, and that ſtate that mercy brings them to, that we are apt to think the change may be eaſily known. See Eph. ii. 1,—18. Yet there are ſo many things that obſtruct, both them that

that have obtained mercy, from owning it, and them that have not obtained it, from acknowledging their want of it, (of which I ſhall not now ſpeak), that ſearching is needful. And for your help in that work, I offer theſe few plain marks.

1. A high value of ſpecial ſaving mercy above common mercy, is a good ſign of one that hath obtained ſaving mercy. There is a ſpecial mercy of God, and there is a common mercy. Special mercy is ſaving; it comes from the heart and love of God, Eph. ii. 4. and is treaſured up for, and laid out only upon his choſen. It is *the favour he bears to his people*, Pſal. cvi. 4. Common mercies are thrown about with a large and indifferent hand: *He maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt*, Matth. v. 45. Now, theſe two ſorts of mercies are as far different, as heaven and earth. The excellency of the one is far beyond that of the other, though we be unworthy of either. *I am leſs than the leaſt of all thy mercies*, ſaid a great ſaint, Gen. xxxii. 10.; and ſo ſhould all ſay. But few do perceive this great difference; and many give the preference to common outward mercy. Who but a Chriſtian doth count it a greater mercy to have the conſcience ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, than to have a large and proſperous eſtate in the world? that the light of God's countenance, and an hour ſpent in his courts, (when the King's preſence is in them), is better than all the enjoyments of this world? Moſes was a man that obtained ſingular mercy from the Lord. It appeared in this, that he *eſteemed the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures in Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26. He had excellent balances and true weights. He put in the one ſcale, Egypt's honours, treaſures, and pleaſures, (and how weighty are ſuch things in the worldling's balances!); and in the other, *the reproach of Chriſt*, and *affliction with the people of God*. His judgment on this weighing, is, That this reproach, becauſe of Chriſt's concern in it; and this affliction, becauſe

cauſe it is of and with God's people, is better than all the other things. The true teſt of mens ſpirits is juſtly taken from their ſettled inward apprehenſion of the worth and value of ſpiritual ſaving mercy, above all outward mercy. Pſal. iv. 6, 7. *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* Moſt men are for any good, they know not well what, and from any hand that can ſhow it, and give it. But David knew what good he would have, and who could ſhow it. *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Why is he ſo earneſt for this bleſſing? *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart,* (carnal men ſeek gladneſs, and make it, and take it to themſelves, as well as they can; but gladneſs of God's putting in their heart, they know not), *more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed.* David doth not here compare, though he doth diſcover, the holineſs of his heart, with the earthlineſs of that of others; he compares not the tenderneſs of his converſation with theirs: but he compares the joy God gave him by the light of his countenance, not with the joy he had, but with that the ungodly have, in their ſenſual ſatisfactions. Try yourſelves by this. Where is your eſteem lodged? What ſort of things are they that reliſh with your ſpirits? Common outward mercies carry away the hearts of the moſt part of men, and this ſhews that few men have obtained ſpecial mercy.

2. He that hath obtained ſpecial mercy, hath a love to it, and to the giver of it, and to the way God gives it, and in which he receives it. He that is a lover of God's mercy in Chriſt, is an obtainer of it. A natural man may have a liking of God's mercy in general: but mercy as from God through Jeſus Chriſt, mercy ſhown on the account of a full ſatisfaction made to juſtice in and by his blood, mercy given freely to glorious ends and purpoſes, every natural man ſeeth no glory, no goodneſs, no beauty, in it. But every obtainer of it doth admire every thing in it. "It is

" rich mercy, ſaith he; it flows from a bleſſed foun-
" tain, free love: runs in a bleſſed channel, the re-
" demption of Jeſus; comes to me in a well-ordered
" covenant; and was ſhown me for his praiſe in my
" ſalvation from ſin and miſery."

3. An obtainer of mercy, is a daily beggar for more mercy. Whenever God's ſpecial mercy is taſted, hunger and thirſt after more is raiſed. No ſooner did Paul obtain mercy, but *behold, he prays*, Acts ix. 11. There is more of mercy yet to be had. Mercy quickens the ſoul's deſires, and enlargeth them. The greateſt receivers are the greateſt beggars: 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. *Deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if ſo be ye have taſted that the Lord is gracious.* This mark is plain, and will never fail. They that drive not a trade of prayer for ſpecial mercy, have not yet obtained it.

4. An obtainer of mercy from the Lord, is a ſhewer of mercy to others. He is a merciful man to others, Matth. v. 7. Col. iii. 12, 13. *Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindneſs*, &c.; *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; even as Chriſt forgave you:* and Eph. iv. 32. *Forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you.* How unbecoming is it, that ſuch ſhould have bowels of braſs, on whom God's bowels of mercy have been poured out? This is a mark that will never fail, but in a high fit of temptation. All that have obtained God's mercy, will be diſpoſed to ſhew their mercy. *Forgiving one another*, is an eaſy thing; it coſts nothing but to think a kind thought: yet how hard is this to many, through the power of corruption? There are ſome acts of mercy, as bounty and charity, that poor Chriſtians have no ability for. But the principle act of mercy is in every Chriſtian's power; and that is mercy to mens ſouls. We cannot give them that mercy we have obtained; but we can, and ſhould wiſh the like to them. Never did a man obtain mercy from the Lord for himſelf, but

but he wiſhed that others ſhould partake of it alſo. The woman of Samaria, John iv. (of whoſe converſion we have the largeſt account of any convert in the Bible), as ſoon as ſhe obtained mercy, (ſhe forgot what ſhe came to the well for, ſhe had got ſomewhat better than the water of Jacob's well; ſhe met with Jacob's God, and had got Jacob's bleſſing), ſhe goes to the city, and turns a ſort of a preacher to them: *Come, ſee a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Chriſt?* ver. 29. She obtained mercy, and would have all the city come, and get mercy alſo. And a great many came, and obtained mercy. Chriſt caught that woman by his grace, and made her as a bait to catch many more. No believer can deny his ſenſe of ſuch a frame as this. There are ſome perſons thou doſt love, and ſhouldeſt love: thou prayeſt for them. What doſt thou mainly aſk for wife, children, brothers, ſiſters, and all or any thou loveſt heartily? is it not, O that they might ſhare in God's ſaving mercy? If thou aſk it for others as the greateſt mercy, thou thyſelf art an obtainer of mercy. Paul obtained mercy. He loved his countrymen the Jews dearly, and on good grounds, Rom. ix, 1,—5. What prays he for them? Rom. x. 1. *My heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſaved.* All right prayer ſhould be the heart's deſire. Salvation is the beſt thing we can pray for to ourſelves, or to them we love. And no man can heartily pray for ſalvation to others, who hath not got it himſelf.

Secondly, I would now direct ſome words to them that have obtained mercy, and know it. Bleſſed be the Lord, that there are not a few in the world, not a few in this city, and, I hope, not a few in this meeting, that have obtained mercy of the Lord, and know it alſo; who can remember when their miſery was great; and when the mercy of the Lord made a viſit to them; and what great things it brought to them, and wrought in them.

1. Let ſuch be very thankful for ſpecial ſaving mercy. Praiſe is a great debt, as well as a great bleſſing. Let none take this as an ordinary duty; but let all Chriſtians know, that the main point of the life and practice of Chriſtianity lies in the performance of it, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Praiſe ſhould riſe according to the worth of what we praiſe for. Greateſt favours call for higheſt praiſes; and ſpecial mercy from the Lord is the higheſt favour. It is a good cuſtom, and a duty alſo that people, when they receive their daily bread from God, do give him thanks for it, as well as beg his bleſſing on it. Pray then, how do you think the Lord will take unthankfulneſs for his ſpecial mercy? How many hath the Lord to give in this charge againſt? "I never gave thee a night's reſt, "but thou gave me thanks for it in the morning; but "I have by my mercy raiſed thee up to newneſs of "life, and I was never thanked for it. I never fed "thy body, but thou bleſſed me for my bounty; but "I have given thee my Son for the bread of thy ſoul, "but no praiſe for this gift. When thou waſt near "death, I did in mercy reſtore thee, and was praiſed "for it; but ſpecial mercy hath delivered thy ſoul "from eternal deſtruction, but when didſt thou praiſe "for that?" Have a care this charge be not given againſt you. Live to his praiſe, and let praiſe be the main work of your life.

2. Walk tenderly under God's ſpecial mercy. The more ſpecial the mercy be, the more carefully it ſhould be improved. God's ſaving mercy is a load, a burden; not indeed hard to be borne, but it is hard to bear it aright; a burden that will not break the back, but will weigh heavy on the ſhoulders of the bearers; and ſuch as are under it, are in no ſmall danger of ſtumbling: Iſa. xxxviii. 15. *What ſhall I ſay? he hath both ſpoken unto me, and himſelf hath done it: I ſhall go ſoftly all my years in the bitterneſs of my ſoul.* And that there was ſpecial mercy in his eye, ſee ver. 17. *Thou haſt in love to my ſoul delivered it from the*

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pit of corruption; for thou haſt caſt all my ſins behind thy back. Here is a right ſenſe of mercy, and a good reſolution about the guiding of it: "I will walk ſoft-"ly all the years (fifteen of them) that God hath ad-"ded to my life." But when performance was there? 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. *But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up.*

3. Obtainers of mercy ſhould aſk grace to guide mercy; and aſk it the more earneſtly and confidently, becauſe they have obtained mercy. Be not diſcouraged in aſking more mercy, becauſe you have made ſo poor improvements of what you have received. Every mercy lays us under an obligation for more ſervice; and grace to enable for that ſervice muſt be given, and therefore ſhould be aſked. We need mercy, God gives it: When we got it, we ſhould guide it well; and in order to that we muſt beg more; new mercy to enable us to guide the old. No mercy from the Lord but it may be ill guided, but the laſt, *eternal life*, Jude ver. 21. A Chriſtian is not out of all danger of abuſing any mercy of the Lord, till he receive perfecting mercy in heaven.

Thirdly, To them that have not obtained mercy, or at leaſt do not know that they have; only four things I would ſay to ſuch. Aſk mercy, receive mercy, plead mercy, hope in his mercy.

1. Aſk mercy. The Lord hath two deſigns in offering and diſpenſing his mercy to men: to be honoured by the prayers of them that want it; and to be glorified by the praiſes of them that get it. This duty of aſking mercy, is frequently commanded by the Lord, commonly practiſed by his people, and never in vain. 1. Aſk mercy like itſelf. Aſk ſome way according to your need, and its worth. If our begging bore any tolerable proportion to the great bleſſing of God's ſaving mercy, what mighty praying would there be? Let not mercy be ſought as a ſmall thing. It is the one thing needful, and it is the one thing we ſhould

ſhould ſeek the Lord. God's mercy, ſaving mercy, free mercy, mercy great, vaſtly above all our miſery; O how would it be aſked, if aſked like itſelf! 2. Aſk mercy at the right door. There is not a crumb of ſaving mercy that comes to any periſhing ſinner, but by Jeſus Chriſt. There is no corn in Egypt, but what comes through this Joſeph's hand. He is a mad beggar of mercy that forgets Chriſt. 3. Aſk mercy in God's name. He that commands us to aſk, and tells us at what door to beg, and promiſeth to give, tells us alſo when we ſhould aſk. Men have their times; as in great diſtreſs, when dying, and a judgment. Beware of putting off aſking, till God's time of giving be paſt. It is an awful word of Chriſt, Luke xiii. 25. *When once the maſter of the hour is riſen up, and hath ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying*, &c. There are two ſad *beginnings* here. *Beginnings to ſtand without when the door is ſhut;* ſuch will eternally ſtand without. *Biginning to knock at the door;* ſuch as begin to knock at God's ſhut door, will never get in. There is no good anſwer to be given by God to ſuch for eternity. Is not that a very unhappy beginning? So our Lord tells us in the parable of the ten virgins, Matth. xxv. 10. The fooliſh came when the door was ſhut. They were fooliſh that they came no ſooner; and miſerable that they came too late. I believe the damned will ſee more of the bleſſedneſs of the ſaved, than the ſaved will ſee of the miſery of the damned. Chriſt expreſsly aggravates the miſery of the damned, by what they ſhall ſee of the bliſs of the ſaved, Luke xiii. 20. But all we ſee in the word that the ſaved ſhall ſee or hear of the miſery of the damned, is their reſurrection to damnation, John v. 29. (which is a moſt miſerable one; better were it for them to have their bodies lie eternally in the grave, than to be raiſed for damnation), their ſentence of condemnation, and their vain pleas and pleadings for mercy. But O that men would come in at God's time,

and

and cry for mercy, as they will do out of time! How much better would it be for them! God's time is *now, to-day, the preſent time:* 2 Cor. vi. 2. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of ſalvation.* If men refuſe God's mercy in his time, he will deny his mercy, when ſought in their time, and out of his. Iſa. xxx. 18. *He waits to be gracious, and willing to be exalted in having mercy.* Notwithſtanding all the mercy with the Lord, all the mercy that is offered in the promiſe, the Lord never promiſed a ſinner his mercy to-morrow. If you will beg his mercy to-day, you may have it, and it ſhall endure for ever. But God never gave an allowance and liberty to any man, to ſpend one day or hour in conſulting whether he ſhould beg God's mercy or not. David had indeed a ſad choice of judgments laid before him, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. and is bid by the Prophet, *Adviſe now, and ſee what anſwer I ſhall return to him that ſent me.* But for a periſhing ſinner, that hath an offer of God's mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, there is no delay allowed, but only he is bid aſk it preſently.

2. Receive God's mercy. Receiving is eaſier than aſking. Aſking requires ſome pains; receiving is but a conſent of the heart to take what is offered. Aſking ſuppoſeth a great and needful bleſſing, that he that wants it would fain have; and therefore he begs it. Receiving implies, that this great bleſſing is in his offer fully and freely; and therefore he muſt accept it. Here is the ſtate of things betwixt God and men in the goſpel. The Lord brings his mercy near to them, offers it to them, bids them take and receive it; but many will not. God offers quarter to rebels in arms againſt him; but they ſtand upon their ſword, and will not take quarter. Miniſters' work is, to intreat and beſeech in Chriſt's ſtead, 2 Cor. v. 20. God only can perſuade and prevail with men. Mercy comes prepared and ready for men. It is prepared in the purchaſe of Chriſt; it is prepared in the well-ordered covenant and as prepared and ready, yet is tendered

dered freely to ſinners: *All things are ready, come to the marriage*, Matth. xxii. 4. All things are ready. God himſelf is ready to give mercy. Chriſt is ready; *he is ſlain for us: let us come and keep the feaſt*, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The Holy Spirit is ready to *ſeal you to the day of redemption*, if you will accept of God's mercy in the Redeemer. Heaven is ready, the way is plain, and all hindrances of law and juſtice removed, Heb. x. 19, 20. The city of refuge is ready; and its gates are open continually, to receive and give entrance to all that flee for ſafety, Heb. vi. 18. Alas! all things are ready; but men are not willing. There is not a moment's time needed to ripen God's mercy for men. No periſhing ſinner, that ſeeth his need of God's mercy, and is willing to receive it, needs ſtay a moment, till mercy be ready for him, or he more ready for it; Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. *The righteouſneſs which is of faith, ſpeaketh on this wiſe*, (How very few have ears to hear ſuch a ſpeaker, and ſuch a ſpeech?), *Say not in thine heart, Who ſhall aſcend into heaven? (that is to bring Chriſt down from above): Or who ſhall deſcend into the deep: (that is to bring up Chriſt again from the dead.)* (Chriſt is come down already from heaven, and is gone back again to heaven). *But what ſaith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach.* Mercy and ſalvation for loſt ſinners is prepared by Chriſt's coming down, and going up again; and he hath lodged the power and virtue of his undertaking in the goſpel. Suck at that well with faith, and thy ſoul ſhall be ſaved: there thou wilt find Chriſt, and all his fulneſs. There was never ſuch a treaty made in the world. We can fetch no ſimilitude fully like this amongſt men. Thus the Lord pleads with men in the goſpel. "You are already undone with ſin and mi-
"ſery lying on you, and you are every hour ſinking
"into greater; let but my mercy in my Son enter in,
"and it will cure all that is paſt and preſent, and pre-
"vent all the miſery that is coming on you." And

will

will not miſerable ſinners receive God's mercy? Are you afraid of ſaving mercy? will it hurt you? why do ye not give it entrance? It is one of the greateſt demonſtrations what monſters ſin hath made men, that they are unwilling to be ſaved by free mercy, in Jeſus Chriſt. Open a door for God's mercy, by a free receiving of it; or elſe you will find the door of mercy ſhut againſt you, when you need it moſt. Your giving way to his mercy, is your receiving of it. Say with the heart, "Let God's mercy enter in upon "me, and ſave me its own way." A yielding, and giving, and putting of a loſt ſoul into the hand of Chriſt, is the nature of ſaving faith in him. Will ye not truſt in his mercy? Is it not able to ſave you? Your want of a ſenſe of your need of his mercy, is a giving the lye to all the threatenings and curſe of the law; your doubting of the ability of his mercy to ſave you, is to give the lye to all the faithfulneſs and truth of God declared and ſworn in the goſpel.

3. Plead mercy. When you beg it, uſe no other plea for mercy, but mercy. When you beg mercy you muſt beg mercy only for mercy's ſake. That that moves God to ſhew mercy, muſt be our argument in pleading for mercy. Wherefore doth God ſhew mercy? Becauſe he will ſhew mercy, and *delights in it*, Micah vii. 18. And therefore ſhould we plead it. Mercy in his heart, is the only ſpring of mercy from his hand. David, who knew God's mercy well, had taſted of it often, and needed it greatly, when fallen into a foul pit, thus pleads for mercy: Pſal. li. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindneſs: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my tranſgreſſions.* Have a care of making any other plea for mercy from the Lord, but that of mercy with him. And ſtick to this plea, and it will prevail. If the Lord for trying of your faith, or Satan for ſhaking it, ſhould ſay, How dare ſuch a vile ſinner as thou art, beg ſo great a gift as ſaving mercy, from ſo holy a God? the poor pleader hath a ready an-

ſwer: "I want mercy as much as my ſoul is worth. "In vain do I ſeek it of any creature; nothing but "his mercy can ſave me. I beg mercy only for mer- "cy's ſake: I bring nothing but a ſtarving ſoul, and "an empty hand. I beg his mercy as an alms, which "will eternally enrich the receiver, and not impo- "veriſh the giver. What can ſuch as I beg of ſuch "a God as he is, but mercy? His name is *Mercy*, my "name is *Miſery*. I would have my miſery relieved "by his mercy, and his mercy glorified in my relief."

4. Hope in his mercy: Pſal. cxlvii. 11. *The Lord taketh pleaſure in them that fear him, in thoſe that hope in his mercy.* Pſal. cxxx. 7. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy.* It is from the devil, for whom there is no mercy, that any of the moſt miſerable out of hell are tempted to think there is no mercy with God for them. He envies men God's mercy. He doth not only tempt to ſin, but alſo to ſecurity in it, till the day of mercy be paſt. If God awaken a ſinner to ſee his need of mercy in time, Satan tempts him to think that it is out of time. In ſuch temptations he acts moſt like himſelf, a reprobate damned ſpirit; and in managing of them he hath great advantages, from his own craft and malice, and mens juſt deſerving of wrath. Look on all ſuch thoughts as from that adverſary, and treat them accordingly. When you beg mercy, look for it: expect to obtain it, when you would lay hold on it. The Lord will never keep back his ſaving mercy from a ſinner that would have it as his life. When you plead for mercy, for mercy's ſake, hope to prevail; and that will help you to plead better.

So much for this exhortation. Will ye go home and do ſo? Will you ſtudy more your miſery, and the greatneſs of his mercy; and aſk and plead for it more earneſtly? There is never better fruit of preaching, than when the hearers are ſent away hungering and thirſting after the Lord's mercy.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I HAVE ſpoke to the firſt of the bleſſings to be got at the throne of grace which we ſhould come for, *obtaining of mercy.* The ſecond is, *The finding of grace to help in time of need.* This expreſſion, *finding of grace*, is probably borrowed from the old teſtament, wherein the beſtowing of favour is uſually ſo expreſſed. We find it in mens pleadings with one another. So Jacob to Eſau, Gen. xxxii. 5. and xxxiii. 1. *Theſe are to find grace in the ſight of my lord.* And he pleads upon it, ver. 10. *If I have found grace in thy ſight, then receive my preſent at my hand: for therefore I have ſeen thy face, as though I had ſeen the face of God; and thou waſt pleaſed with me.* Jacob had ſeen God's face that morning, and had found grace in his ſight, and he remembers it when he finds grace in the ſight of his angry brother. So we find the phraſe uſed in dealing with God, by Moſes, Exodus xxxiii. 12, 13. *Yet thou haſt ſaid, I know thee by name, and thou haſt found grace in my ſight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy ſight, ſhew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy ſight.*

The firſt thing I would remark here, is, the connection betwixt theſe two bleſſings and errands, *obtaining of mercy*, and *finding of grace.* Mercy and grace are joined together by God, and are not to be put aſunder by man. Many would ſeparate them.

They would be content to obtain mercy; but they care not ſo much for his grace. But ſuch are only profane ignorant perſons, that know neither God nor themſelves, nor his mercy, nor his grace. The Lord will not give mercy without grace, nor grace without mercy. All that receive either, receive both; and all that would have either, muſt aſk both; and none can aſk either aright, but he that aſks both.

This grace we are called to come to the throne of grace for the finding of, is ſpecified from its great advantage and uſefulneſs. It is *grace to help in time of need.* The words in the original are, *grace for ſeaſonable opportune help.* It is the nature of this grace, that it is helpful. Its helpfulneſs mainly appears in a time of need. A time of need will come: this grace is to be aſked before that time come; it is to be waited upon till the time of need come, and uſed when it comes.

The truth to be ſpoke to, is this plain one:

Doct. *That all that hear of God's offer of grace, ſhould come to God to aſk it, and get, to find it.*

Men ſhould come to God's throne of grace, for grace for themſelves. They ſhould come to God in Chriſt Jeſus, for the grace of God in and by Chriſt Jeſus. This is a truth ſo bright in its own evidence, that there is no need to confirm it. What hath been ſaid of coming to obtain mercy, is equally binding unto coming to find grace.

Two things, then, I would ſpeak unto at this time.

1. What is this grace we are called to come to the throne of grace for.

2. What finding of grace is; what ſpecialty is there in this expreſſion? It is certain, never did a man find grace, before grace found him. Grace is always the firſt finder: but the ſenſe of it, and our knowledge of our having found it, follows after.

I. *What*

I. *What is this grace we are to come to the throne of grace for finding of?* We have need to know this diſtinctly. The reaſon why many are ſo confuſed, and dark, and barren in their prayers, is, becauſe they know not what is to be got by prayer. If we had a clear knowledge of the full extent of this grace that is to be diſpenſed at this throne of grace, we ſhould quickly know what to aſk, and find matter for aſking continually.

This *grace of God*, that we are invited to come to the throne of grace for finding of, comes under three different conſiderations. 1. As it is in the fountain from whence it flows. 2. As it is in the channel in which it runs. 3. As it is in the veſſels that do receive it.

1. Grace conſidered as in the fountain from whence it flows, is grace in God. The ſcriptures take notice of the ſpecial intereſt that each of the three bleſſed perſons of the godhead have in diſpenſing of grace. We find the Father called *the God of all grace*, 1 Pet. v. 10.; and there Chriſt is alſo named, and the Holy Ghoſt implied. The Father, the God of all grace, is the caller; he calleth us to his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus; we are fitted for the poſſeſſion of it by the grace of the Holy Ghoſt. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is oft ſpoke of as the fountain of grace, John i. 14. *Full of grace and truth;* and that we might know that this fountain-fulneſs in him is for communication, ver. 16. *And out of his fulneſs have we all received, and grace for grace.* The Holy Ghoſt is called *the Spirit of grace*, Heb. x. 29.; *of grace and ſupplication*, Zech. xii. 10.; *of faith*, 2 Cor. iv. 13. When we come to the throne of grace, for grace in this conſideration, we come for the manifeſtation and communication of grace from the fountain, according to his will and our need, for the carrying on of our ſalvation to the praiſe of his grace. It is to be obſerved in that apoſtolic wiſh, which by a good cuſtom is made the concluding bleſſing in Chriſtian aſſemblies, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. *The grace*

of

of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all, Amen, that there is grace in the Father's love, and grace in the communion of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as there is love and communion in the grace of our Lord Jeſus. For grace is in all divine favour, and in all its fruits, freely beſtowed on the undeſerving ſons of men.

2. Grace may be conſidered as it is in the channel in which it runs, in the way and means of its conveyance, uſually called *the means of grace*. And this is the goſpel. It is true, that this form of ſpeech, *means of grace*, is not a ſcriptural phraſe, though it be uſual with us. But by it we mean nothing, but ſuch means as are hallowed by divine inſtitution, and backed with a gracious promiſe of beſtowing grace on the right uſers thereof. The main of which means, is the goſpel itſelf, called by Paul, in Acts xx. 24. *the goſpel of the grace of God*, and ver. 32. *the word of his grace*. And in Tit. ii. 11. the goſpel is called ſimply, *the grace of God*. If you take away the doctrine of free grace, you take away the goſpel. It is but an empty ſhadow, a falſe name, to call that doctrine *goſpel*, that is not *the word of his grace*. The grace of God in the means is univerſally offered to all that hear the goſpel; but the bleſſing itſelf is ſovereignly diſpenſed, like grace. There is ground ſufficient in the promiſe for faith in waiting on the Lord in the uſe of his appointments: but yet the Lord never uſed any outward mean that was always effectual to all them that had it. The greateſt of any outward means that ever men were under, was the perſonal miniſtry of Chriſt; yet all his hearers did not believe, yea, but a few did, John vi. 26, *&c.* What a heavenly diſcourſe doth Chriſt deliver! but what was the effect of it? ver. 66. *From that time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him*. The Lord hath wiſely ordered it thus, that the means (the channel his grace runs in) are at ſome-

times

times, and to ſome perſons, filled with his grace; and at other times are but empty pipes, that the means themſelves may not be doated on, and that the fountain may ſtill be depended on. When, then, we come to the throne of grace, for grace as in the means, we come begging, that the Lord, who hath appointed the means, and keeps the bleſſing of them in his own hand, would fill the means with his grace, and fill our ſouls with the communication of that grace, in our uſe of theſe means.

3. Grace is conſidered as it is in the veſſels that receive it, in men that partake of it. And here it will be needful to diſtinguiſh. The grace of God as received, comes under a very notable diſtinction of *common grace*, and *ſaving grace*, or *ſpecial*. Somewhat hath been hinted of the ſame diſtinction, betwixt *common* and *ſpecial ſaving mercy*. But of this diſtinction, as to grace received, I would ſpeak more fully.

Firſt, *Common grace* is ſo called, not becauſe it is ordinary and uſual, (for in bad times it is rare enough), but becauſe it is not ſaving. It is moſt likely, that in ſuch happy times (which we cannot now boaſt of, but only hope for) when ſaving grace is beſtowed on many, common grace is diſpenſed more frequently alſo. That there is ſuch a thing as common grace, is as certain, as it is that there is ſuch a creature (if I may ſo call him) as a hypocrite in the church, or in the world. For an hypocrite is nothing elſe but an unrenewed ſinner, painted over with more or leſs common grace. And to men that ſee the outſide of others only, he may appear like a true Chriſtian.

I would give ſome particular inſtances of this common grace.

1. There is a common enlightening grace, a common illumination, Heb. vi. 4. and x. 26. The apoſtle ſuppoſeth, that there is an *enlightening*, and a *receiving a knowledge of the truth*, that may be where a fatal apoſtaſy may follow. The Lord may give the light of his word; and, in and by that light, may dart

dart in ſome clear beams of goſpel-truth on ſuch that are led no farther. It is far from being true, that all knowing heads have ſound hearts. There may be, and often is, much clear light in the mind about points of ſaving truth, when there is no ſenſe, no ſavour, no faith in the heart. Acts xxvi. we find Paul ſpeaking in the moſt noble aſſembly that it is like he ever ſpoke in; a King and a Queen, and a Roman Governor greater than both. In this auguſt aſſembly, Paul, though a priſoner in bonds, remembers his being an apoſtle, and preacheth Chriſt, and takes Chriſt's grace in converting him, for his text: ver. 24. *When he is thus ſpeaking, Feſtus ſaid with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beſide thyſelf: much learning doth make thee mad.* At the ſame time, ver 28. *Agrippa ſaid unto Paul, Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.* This was a great deal better than Feſtus's word, yet a poor word in itſelf. It ſpoke ſome glancing of ineffectual light on his mind. An almoſt Chriſtian, and no more, is but a ſinner almoſt ſaved, and no more; or one that is no Chriſtian, and never ſaved at all.

2. There is common awakening grace. The Lord ſometimes alarms the conſciences of the ungodly and may raiſe a great ſenſe of ſin in ſuch as are never forgiven; and fears of hell, yea, a foretaſte of hell, in ſome that never eſcape it. *I have ſinned* ſaith Pharaoh; *I have ſinned* ſaith Saul: *I have ſinned* (ſaith Judas), *in betraying innocent blood.* Alas, poor wretch! it had been better to have confeſſed his ſin againſt his maſter, to his maſter, than to his murderers. Felix trembled when Paul preached. It was grace in God to come ſo near to him, and great power was put forth. What elſe could make ſuch a great prince as Felix was, to tremble at the words of a poor priſoner ſtanding before him in his chains? Awakening grace is but common grace. The law wounds many a conſcience that the goſpel doth not heal; becauſe not applied to. No wound can the law

law make, which the goſpel cannot heal. Boaſt not of your wounds by the law, unleſs you can tell how you were healed. There is no cure for a conſcience wounded by ſin and by the law, but the blood of Jeſus ſhed for ſin. Did ye come to it? Heb. xii. 24. Did he apply it to you? Were you cured of your wounds before ye went to him, and before he came to you? Woful is that cure, and worſe than the wound. Many poor creatures are wounded by the law, and to the law they go for healing. But God never appointed the law to heal a wounded conſcience; and it never did, nor can, nor will, to the end of the world, nor to eternity. It is Chriſt's name, and property and glory, to be the only phyſician of ſouls; and all muſt die of the diſeaſe of ſin, that are not his happy patients.

3. There is common reſtraining grace; an act of God's grace and wiſdom, which he often puts forth in his ruling of this wicked world. How quickly would this earth become a hell, were it not for this reſtraining grace? if all unrenewed men were permitted by God, to commit all the ſin Satan tempts to, and their natures incline them to, there would be no living in this world for the godly. This reſtraining grace we find a Heathen had: Gen. xx. 6. *I with-held thee from ſinning againſt me*, ſaith the Lord to Abimelech. And, which is more, we find a great ſaint praying for it, Pſal. xix. 13. *Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins, let them not have dominion over me:* that is, "Lay a powerful reſtraint on me by thy grace, "that when I am tempted, my way may be hedged "up, and I may be kept from complying with the "temptation." But yet bare reſtraining grace is not deſired by a Chriſtian in good caſe, without ſanctifying grace. He deſires not only the reſtraining of the outward acts of ſin, but the removing of inward inclinations to ſin; he begs the renewing and changing of the heart. So David, when he had fallen foully, by the ſtrength of inward corruption, and God's leav-

ing of him to himſelf; when recovered by grace, and renewed unto repentance, prays like a wife believer, Pſal. ii. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right ſpirit within me.*

4. There is common aſſiſting grace. Many a bad man hath had good aſſiſtance from God in a good work. The Spirit of God hath clothed many, and enabled them to great and good works, which God gets ſervice by, and the world good by, though the doers thereof be not accepted: Matth. vii. 22. *Many ſhall ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* All great things, and all done in Chriſt's name, and done by his aſſiſtance. In their *caſting out devils*, and in *working of miracles*, there was an exerting of omnipotency, with and by their faith; which is the greateſt divine aſſiſtance we can imagine. And no doubt they were aſſiſted by Chriſt's Spirit in their *propheſying in his name*. Now, ſuch things they thus did. Chriſt, in his reply, denies not their doing of them, finds no fault with the works in themſelves; but all his quarrel is with the workers: *I never knew you, you are workers of iniquity.*

5. To common grace belongs ſome comfort and joy reaching the heart in hearing the word. Our Lord expreſsly explains the ſtony ground this way, Matth. xiii. 20. *He that receiveth the ſeed in ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.*

6. Laſtly, There is reforming grace, that belongs to common grace. The power of the word may come ſo on natural mens conſciences, that they may reform many things; as Mark vi. 20. *Herod, when he heard John Baptiſt, did many things, and heard him gladly.* So, 2 Pet. ii. 20.

If any ſay, What! ſhould we come to the throne of grace for common grace? I anſwer, Not for it alone, but for it, and better. It is a mercy to have common

common grace; it is grace that is undeſerved: but it is a woful ſnare to him that reſts in it. If the Lord reſtrain your corruptions; if he enlighten your minds, and awaken your conſciences; if he aſſiſt you with gifts for good works; if he help you to mend any thing that is amiſs in your converſation; bleſs him for all: but reſt not on any of theſe things. It is a higher and better grace that is ſaving, and that you muſt ſeek after.

Secondly, *Saving grace*, as diſtinct from, and beyond all that is common, reſpects three things.

1. It reſpects and works a change in a man's ſtate, which common grace never performs. Saving grace changeth a perſon's ſtate. By this grace an enemy is reconciled to God, a guilty ſinner is juſtified freely through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus, a ſtranger receives ſonſhip by Chriſt. Common grace never alter's the ſtate of a man's perſon, but it leaves him where it found him. It never doth, nor can take him out of the old ſtock of fallen Adam; he ſtill lies in that pit; and is never by it tranſlated into Chriſt, and ingrafted in him, as a new head. But ſaving grace, when it comes, doth all, Eph. ii. 4,—18.

2. Saving grace reſpects man's ſinful nature, and changeth it. And this grace thus working, is called *regenerating*, *ſanctifying*, and *renewing of men.* Chriſt calls it, *being born again*, John iii. 3. *If any man be in Chriſt*, (through this grace), *he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17. This the apoſtle calls, Tit. iii. 5. *According to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* Natural men are apter to look to their converſation, than to their nature. They may ſee many things amiſs in their way, who are loth to look into their heart. And if light ſhine in, to diſcover inward heart-faults, they are ſtill backward to own that all is naught, and that there is no good in their hearts. If the light purſue them yet cloſer, and make them ſee that all is ſtark naught within, they are ſtill more backward to own

the true ſpring of their diſeaſe, and the true remedy for it; that all this dominion of ſin over them, flows from the natural ſtate of their perſons, as ſtanding ſtill in and under the firſt ſinful Adam; and can never be altered and mended, but by grace putting them into Chriſt, as the root of their new life.

3. Saving grace reſpects and works on the new nature. Special grace not only changeth a man's ſtate, nor his old corrupt nature only: but it works on this new nature wrought by grace. The ſpecial operation of the grace of God, in and from the fountain, is upon his own new creation in the hearts of his children. We cannot conceive it fully; our minds are not able to take in theſe depths of God. We hear from, and read in the word, of the intimate correſpondence the Lord entertains with them in whom he dwells. *Chriſt dwells in the heart by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. *His Spirit dwells in his people*, Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. But what is it in their hearts that he dwells in? He dwells in his own workmanſhip in their hearts, in his own new creation, in his own garden that he hath planted in them. There his preſence is, and there his eye is, on that his hand is; this is that he waters, and carefully looks after. When a believer comes to the throne of grace for this grace, he comes to beg that the new creation in him may be viſited, refreſhed, and ſtrengthened, and brought to perfection. They that have no planting of Chriſt in them, want this errand to the throne of grace, that believers daily come upon.

So much for the firſt thing, What this grace is?

II. *What is the finding of this grace?* Why the apoſtle uſeth this phraſe, different from the former, about mercy? That was *obtaining of mercy*, this is *finding of grace*. *Mercy* and *grace* are near a-kin; and ſo is *obtaining* and *finding*. Beſides the Hebrew phraſe, remarked already, theſe things I would note in it.

1. I conceive, that this phraſe of *finding grace*, doth imply the duty of ſeeking it; according to our Lord's own

own direction, Matth. vii. 7. *Aſk, and it will be given you: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you.* Where, and in ver. 8. our Lord gives three commands to one duty of prayer, under three ſeveral names; and ſix promiſes for encouragement, under three different names alſo, redoubled.

2. This form of ſpeaking, points forth the giving and beſtowing of grace. His grace and favour is what is given to, beſtowed on, and enjoyed by them that comes to the throne of grace. When the old world was exceeding bad, all ſtark naught, and but one good man in it, (you muſt needs think that it was a bad world then), and that was Noah, Gen. vi. 8. *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* This word we ſhould regard the more, that it is the firſt place where *the grace of God* is mentioned in ſcripture. *Thee have I ſeen righteous before me in this generation,* ſaith the Lord to him, Gen. vii. 1. And how this man came by his righteouſneſs, ſee in Heb. xi. 7. *By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not ſeen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the ſaving of his houſe; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteouſneſs which is by faith.* Who but the Spirit of God by Paul (who I think was the penman of this epiſtle) would have found the righteouſneſs by faith in Noah's building of the ark? Many, nay, moſt of men, called *Chriſtians*, cannot ſee this righteouſneſs that is by faith, in the goſpel itſelf. There was a brave inheritance and eſtate in this righteouſneſs of faith, ſecured and revealed in the firſt goſpel, Gen. iii. 15. Of this eſtate Abel and Enoch were poſſeſſed; and Noah *became* (that is, declared himſelf) an heir of it, by his faith, and the fruits of it. The whole world had the warning; Noah from God, the world by Noah. All were equally concerned in the danger. Noah preached it to them; and God's Spirit was with him, ſtriving with them a hundred and twenty years. But not one man found grace, but he alone. A prodigious depth of judgment

judgment and mercy! ſuch a man as Noah preached ſo long to *the world of the ungodly*, as 2 Pet. ii. 5. and not one ſingle man or woman believed. He only *found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* Jer. xxxi. 2. *Thus ſaith the Lord, The people that were left of the ſword, found grace in the wilderneſs: even Iſrael, when I went to cauſe him to reſt.* It is a great bleſſing to find grace any where; but to find grace in the wilderneſs, to find grace where and when the ſword of God's anger and juſtice is deſtroying multitudes, is heightened grace. Grace falls ſtill on remnants. Juſtice and wrath ſeizeth on the bulk and whole piece: Rom. xi. 5. *A remnant according to the election of grace.* ver. 7. *The election obtained it,* (that is grace): *and the reſt were blinded* and hardened. The more be left, and the fewer be ſavingly taken, the greater is the grace ſhewed to thoſe few, and the more happy are they that find it.

3. In this phraſe of *finding grace*, there may this be conceived, if you will underſtand it rightly, the caſualty of the getting of grace. There is no ſuch thing as caſualty to God: he always knows when, and where, and on whom to beſtow his grace. But the beſtowing of his grace is a mere caſualty to all men; both to them that receive it, and to others that look on. My meaning is, grace comes unlooked for, undeſerved, undeſired, unexpected, in its firſt viſit eſpecially. So that all receivers of it may ſay as Hagar, the only good word we have of that bond-woman, Gen. xvi. 13. *And ſhe called the name of the Lord that ſpake to her, Thou God ſeeſt me;* (Happy are they that can name God from his grace and mercy to them. David calls him, *the God of my mercy*, Pſal. lix. 10. 17.); *for ſhe ſaid, Have I alſo here looked after him that ſeeth me?* "The Lord hath had his eye on me for "good, when I was not thinking on him." Grace always comes at firſt by ſurpriſe. How many are there that attend diligently on all the means of grace and never find grace? when ſome that come but by

by accident, (as we think,) grace finds them, and they find it. This is the treaſure hid in the field of the goſpel: bleſſed is he that finds it, Matt. xiii. 44. Many dig in this field, and never find the treaſure in it. Men ſhould uſe means, Prov. viii. 33, 34.; miniſters ſhould deſign wiſely to catch ſouls, and labour painfully in it: but the Lord, in his application of his grace, paſſeth by many that we would faineſt have ſaved, and lights on others we never thought on. And let him do with his own grace as ſeemeth him good. Little thought little Zaccheus of ſalvation, when he climbed the tree to ſee Jeſus paſs by, Luke xix. If Chriſt had not called him down, the poor rich publican was as like as any in the company to have let Chriſt paſs on in his journey. When Saul was going his wicked journey, Acts ix. who would have thought that grace would have fallen on him as it did! All partakers of grace, that can remember its firſt viſit, can witneſs, that their finding of grace was a mere caſualty to them. They thought not of it, they ſought it not; yet it found them, and was found by them: Iſa. lxv. 1. *I am ſought of them that aſked not for me; I am found of them that ſought me not.* Seeking is our duty, and finding is our mercy; but both right ſeeking, and gracious finding, are ſingly owing to his grace. The apoſtle, after a deep diſcourſe of the ſovereignty of God in diſpenſing his grace, faith, Rom. ix. 30, 31. *What ſhall we ſay then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteouſneſs, have attained to righteouſneſs, even the righteouſneſs which is of faith; but Iſrael which followed after the law of righteouſneſs, hath not attained to the law of righteouſneſs.* The cauſe of Iſrael's miſſing righteouſneſs, he gives verſe 32, *Becauſe they ſought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they* did not build and believe on Chriſt as a foundation, but *ſtumbled at him* as a *ſtumbling-ſtone.* A moſt dreadful way of ruin, for men to break their necks on the Saviour. But the apoſtle gives no cauſe why the Gentiles attained the righ-

righteouſneſs of faith; but his diſcourſe hints it plainly. Grace ſent the goſpel to them, and grace bleſſed it to them, in working faith in them; by the which they laid hold on the righteouſneſs offered to them; and ſo they were poſſeſſed of it, and ſaved by that poſſeſſion.

APPLICATION. Should we come to the throne of grace for grace? Then, 1 I *infer*, That every man ſhould pray. Have you found grace already? Come for more; for more grace is needed by you, and more is to be had from the giver. It is a bleſſed name of God, much to be called upon by us, James iv. 6. *He giveth more grace.* It is much that he giveth any grace at all; but more, that he ſtill gives *more.* If he gives more and more grace, you ſhould come more and more for this more grace. If you have never received grace you muſt come to this throne of grace, where only it is to be found. This text hath a ſtrong argument in it, as well as a great encouragement. Are men invited to the throne of grace that they may find grace? Then ſurely graceleſs folks ſhould mainly come, and have moſt need to come. You will ſay, that *the prayer of the wicked man is an abomination to the Lord.* True; what then? Therefore, ſay you, I ſhould not pray. A bad inference. But ſay you, Were it not better that a man ſhould mend and grow better, and then come, and not till then? This is a perverſe method, that Satan befools multitudes with. I pray you, how long may a man be amending himſelf, ere he be one bit better, till the grace of God come and mend him? A ſinner never doth know truly his badneſs, till he ſee it incurable by all his own doings, and that it is only curable by ſovereign grace. Men ſee a little of the fruits of ſin in their walk; and them, or ſome of them, they think they may remove; and ſo indeed they may. But the fountain remains ſtill, and will ſend forth its ſtreams one way or other. Till a man ſee his heart and nature, he ſeeth but the outſide of ſin in himſelf. It is the ſight of ſin in our

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nature, of ſin as our nature, that is truly humbling. Then a man ſeeth himſelf quite loſt, and for ever undone, without any poſſible ground of hope, unleſs almighty free grace undertake for him.

In anſwer to this objection, in all its ſtrength, I ſay four things.

1. Coming to the throne of grace for grace, is required by God. He commands it as a piece of honour to him, that all ſhould implore his grace. No ſinful or miſerable circumſtances can be in the condition of any out of hell, that can diſſolve mens obligations to this duty. The power of ſin and guilt on an ungodly man, diſables him quite from the right performance of any command of God; but doth not looſe the obligation of God's law upon his conſcience. You are bound to pray; you cannot pray. This is your ſtrait; own it. Grace can only extricate you out of it.

2. Secure neglect of prayer, is a great deal worſe than a faulty managing of it. Let ſuch folks ſay then I will pray, and try to pray: and though I ſhould mar twenty prayers, I will pray ſtill; for it is better to try as we can, than to neglect it quite. What know you but grace may come in, and help you, when ſinking under the weight of prayer?

3. Is not that a good prayer, and fit for your caſe, Luke xi. 1. *Lord, teach us to pray?* "Lord teach "us to come the right way to the throne of grace?" If you can ſay no more, ſay that, and you can ſay nothing better. An humble groaning to Chriſt, to be taught by him to pray, hath more of true prayer in it, that many fine words, which men call *prayer*, and commend as brave praying.

4. Is it not a throne of grace you are called to come to, that ye may find grace? You want grace, and cannot come, ſay ye; You want grace, and therefore come, ſay I. You are not to bring grace of your own working, but to find it of his giving at this throne. Would you have grace? Come, and get it. Men periſh under the goſpel only for their refuſing of the

grace of God. And juſtly are they counted refuſers of grace, that will not come where it is to be found: and moſt righteous is their condemnation.

Inference 2. Should we come to the throne of grace, that we may find grace? Then prayerleſs people are graceleſs people. Grace is only to be had at this throne; therefore ſuch as have no buſineſs at the throne of grace, are graceleſs people. A prayerleſs perſon is a graceleſs perſon; a prayerleſs family is a graceleſs family; and London would be a graceleſs city, and England a graceleſs kingdom, if there were no ſeekers of God in them. But bleſſed be God, there are a great many. The Lord *make them an hundred times more, and that our eyes may ſee it*, as Joab ſaid to David about numbering of Iſrael, 2 Samuel xxiv. 3. Jer. x. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name. Heathens that know not God*, and *families that call not on his name*, are the ſame ſort of folks, and the ſame wrath of God hangs over them. Wrath overtakes all that have not found grace at this throne.

Inference 3. It follows alſo, that the moſt diligent pliers of the throne of grace, are the greateſt receivers of grace: and the greateſt receivers of grace, are the greateſt comers to, and uſers of the throne of grace. Would ye try the meaſures of grace received? Try it by your diligence in praying. Some would fain know how it is with their ſouls. Here is a ſhort, plain, and ſure mark to judge it by. How goes the work of praying? It is a better mark, than you increaſe in light and knowledge of the letter of goſpel-truth; better than to try yourſelves by your public duties, and attendance upon all outward ordinances. It is impoſſible, that a man can be diligent, painful, and ſerious in plying of the throne of grace, but there will be grace found, more or leſs, of one ſort or other. Every one muſt ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxiii. 28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God;* and the

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oftner the better. *He hath not ſaid to us, that we ſhould ſeek his face in vain*, Iſa. xlv. 19. And none of the ſeekers of his face dare ſay, that they do ſeek him in vain, unleſs in a fit of temptation, when they lye againſt their right. It is alſo as impoſſible that the work of grace can proſper, when this *high-way is unoccupied*, as Deborah ſings, Judges v. 6. That Chriſtian that lets graſs grow on the road betwixt him and heaven, rottenneſs is entring into his bones, a conſumption is coming on upon his ſoul, and *the holy fleſh is paſſed from him*, as Jer. xi. 15. The ſavour and reliſh the ſoul finds in approaching to the throne of grace is the ſureſt teſt of ſoul-approaching. In this I appeal to the conſciences of all that ever knew communion with God. Is it not beſt with you every way, when you are moſt with him? Do not your burdens grow light, when you caſt them on the Lord? Is not your path plain, when his candle ſhineth upon you; and doth it not ſhine when you are much in company? Difficulties evaniſh, and hard work grows eaſy, when the Lord is with you, and you with him. See how the apoſtle joins things together, Jude, ver. 20, 21. *But ye, beloved, building up yourſelves on your moſt holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghoſt, keep yourſelves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life.* Your faith, your love, your hope, are all to be acted in prayer: and are cheriſhed by prayer, and ſtrengthened by the anſwer of prayer. Would you have plenty of the grace of God? Here is a plain and ſure way taught you by the apoſtle; and he joins himſelf with them he exhorts, *Let us come to the throne of grace, that we may find grace.*

SERMON IX.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE gracious call and invitation contained in this text, hath been often ſpoke to: an invitation frequently delivered in the preaching of the goſpel, and as frequently ſlighted by moſt of the hearers of the goſpel. It is ſuch an invitation, as if it were delivered in the laſt day to the miſerable company on Chriſt's left hand, we may think what complying with it would there be. If there were a throne of grace ſet up then but for one hour, where mercy and grace might be had in that time of need, think ye not that there would be coming and crowding, crying and roring for mercy and grace? But that day will afford no ſuch privilege. Now you have it; and the Lord knows and next to him your conſciences know, how this is entertained. What this throne of grace is; what coming to it is; what boldneſs in coming is allowed; what ground there is for this boldneſs, have been ſpoke to. The laſt thing in this verſe, what bleſſings may be had by coming, hath been ſpoke to alſo; of the mercy to be obtained, and of the grace to be found. Of this laſt I have handled two things. 1. What is the grace that is to be found? 2. What the phraſe of *finding grace* imports?

There are two things more that remain in the text. 1. *The helpfulneſs of this grace.* We are called to come to *find grace to help.* 2. *The ſeaſonableneſs of this help of grace.* It is *grace to help in time of need.*

So

So our tranſlation carries it, and pretty well. The original runs in fewer words, *grace unto ſeaſonable help*, or *help in due ſeaſon.* Of theſe two I would ſpeak at this time.

I. I would ſpeak of *the helpfulneſs of grace.* God's grace is a moſt helpful bleſſing.

1. It is promiſed, by him that gives it, as help. Iſa. xli. 10. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs.* Alas! who hath faith enough to draw at this deep well of ſalvation? Every word hath rich food for faith. Whenever God would engage the heart of a poor creature to a dependence on him, he doth it, by promiſing to be that to them, and to do that for them, that none beſides himſelf can be or do. No man can truly act faith on God, for that he thinks a creature can do for him. You never believe ſoundly, but when you look to, and wait on God, for that that is impoſſible utterly to the whole creation to give to you, or to do for you.

2. Again, we find the ſaints beg God's help. Whenever they come to God in earneſt, they come to this; *Lord help;* for *all other help is vain.* There is no more common prayer in the old and new teſtament, and to this day, than prayer for the Lord's helping grace. All our prayers, in their greateſt variety, center in this, *Help us by thy grace.* The great believer, Matth. xv. 25. *came and worſhipped him, ſaying, Lord, help me.* A ſhort prayer, but mighty, and full of faith, A weaker man in faith than this woman, Mark ix. 22. *Have compaſſion on us, and help us,* praying for himſelf and his ſon; ver. 24. he prays for himſelf alone, *Lord, help my unbelief.* There is no believer on earth who may not daily pray this prayer.

3. All the people of God find the helpfulneſs of his grace. All that ſeek it, find it; and all that find it, find the helpfulneſs of his grace.

Firſt,

First, I would in a few things ſhew the helpfulneſs of grace.

1. The grace of God helps always to purpoſe, and effectually. This grace helped Paul to *labour more abundantly than all the apoſtles*, 2 Cor. xv. 10. I ſay not, that this is always ſenſible to the receiver; but only that grace given is always really effectual for the end for which it is given. It is not given in vain.

2. The grace of God helps univerſally. There is no caſe wherein it is not helpful. As *without Chriſt we can do nothing*, John xv. 5.; ſo, *thro' him ſtrengthning*, we may *do all things*, or *any thing*, Phil. iv. 13. A Chriſtian can imagine, can foreſee no condition, no trial, no difficulty, wherein the Lord's grace cannot help him. So the text runs, *that we may find grace to help in time of need.* Let the time be what it will, and the need what it will, grace can help in it. It were a ſad weakneſs of faith for any Chriſtian to ſay, *I am in that condition, that the grace of God cannot help me in.* His grace is omnipotent.

3. Grace helps ſweetly. I mean, that it doth not help as an external help, but as an internal. As for a familiar ſimilitude: A weak and weary, or lame perſon, may be helped by the ſtrength of another, or by being carried; but this is but external help. This weak or lame perſon is helped far better, when his infirmity is removed, and new ſtrength given to him, ſo that he can pleaſantly walk and run: Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried thou anſweredſt me; and ſtrengthenedſt me with ſtrength in my ſoul.* It is true, the grace of God wherein our ſtrength conſiſts, is without us, and in him; but it is inwardly applied to us, when ſtrength is found and felt. Therefore is it that believers not only find, by the diſpenſings of his helping grace, an effectual ſtrength for their work and duty; but a great deal of ſweetneſs and eaſineſs in the exerting of that gracious help. So Pſal. cxix. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou ſhalt enlarge my heart.* When *he draws, we run*, Song i. 4.

When

When ſuch helping influences of grace come on believers, holy obedience becomes in a manner as ſweet, eaſy, and natural to them, as it is to a man that hath bodily ſtrength, to uſe it in ſpeaking, walking, or working: Iſa. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew* (or change) *their ſtrength: they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint.* Pſal. ciii. 5. *Thy youth is renewed like the eagles*, is one of the notes in the Pſalmiſt's ſweet ſong. No ſaint is ignorant of this in his own experience. Who knows not that at ſome times their work is heavy, and is a burden too heavy for them; at other times it is as light as a feather; and as pleaſant and eaſy to them, as for a bird that hath wings to fly?

4. Laſtly, The grace of God helps very myſteriouſly. Sometimes its help is very ſecret; and at other times it is very plain to be diſcovered. Its help is ſometimes ſo ſecret that the ſaints cannot know or diſcern it at preſent, but they are made to know it afterwards: Pſal. lxxiii. 2. *But as for me, my feet were almoſt gone: my ſteps had well nigh ſlipt.* ver. 22. *So fooliſh was I, and ignorant: I was as a beaſt before thee.* This is the account he gives of the power of the temptation he was under, and of the bad frame it had brought upon him. ver. 23. *Nevertheleſs, I am continually with thee: thou haſt holden me by my right hand.* He did not know this, till he was brought out of the darkneſs of the temptation: but then he did diſcern, that there had been a ſecret ſupport given him, otherwiſe he had fallen utterly.

Secondly, What encouragement have we to come to the throne of grace for this helping grace?

1. The propoſal and revelation made to us of this grace as helpful, is an encouragement to come for it. Hath the Lord revealed his grace, as only helpful to his people; and ſhould they not come for that help? Your faith is not very ſtrong and active, unleſs you can catch at the grace of God, without a plain particular

cular promiſe. I ſay not, but there are promiſes many and great of this helping grace, and that faith muſt build upon them, and doth: but I only mean, that the bare revelation of the treaſures of grace that are with the Lord, ſhould, when an intereſt in the promiſes is dark, encourage a poor ſoul to come for a ſhare of this grace of God: Pſal. cxxx. 4. *But there is forgiveneſs with thee.* He ſaith not, *There is forgiveneſs for me;* but, *There is forgiveneſs with thee.* So verſe 7. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* Wherefore is this *forgiveneſs*, this *mercy*, this *redemption*, with the Lord; and why is it revealed; but that the guilty ſhould come for this *forgiveneſs*, the miſerable for this *mercy*, the many-ways captives for this *plenteous redemption?* The Lord's fulneſs of grace is an argument for our faith, as well as his goodneſs and faithfulneſs in making and performing promiſes of grace.

2. But we have promiſes alſo for our encouragement. Promiſes imply God's fulneſs of grace; but do expreſs his good will to diſpenſe it, and do bind and engage his truth to fulfil them, to all that take God at his word, and truſt him on his word. It is a pity, that ever the *exceeding great and precious promiſes*, and *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 1, 4. ſhould be parted. Mark x. 49. *And Jeſus ſtood ſtill, and commanded him to be called: and they call the blind man, ſaying unto him, Be of good comfort, riſe; he calleth thee.* They had no promiſe; but they underſtood Chriſt's calling of the blind man, was an act of mercy, and on a deſign of ſhewing more mercy. But we have many promiſes of grace.

3. We have all the experience of the communication of his grace, according to his promiſes, for our encouragement in coming for grace. Every ſupplicant for grace ſhould encourage his heart, by all the Lord's diſpenſings of his grace. How many of theſe are revealed in the word! and many like them daily

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are to be ſeen in the church of Chriſt. If you have ſuch experiences of your own, build upon them, praiſe for them, and beg more. If you have none of your own, behold the ſhowers of grace, that have fallen upon many as bad as yourſelves, and which have changed them into that ſame bleſſed ſtate that you deſire to be in.

APPLICATION. 1. Is the grace of God thus helpful? and ſhould we come to the throne of grace for the help of grace? Then we ſee, that weak Chriſtians ſhould pray moſt. Such as can do leaſt for themſelves, have moſt need of grace to help them, and ſhould ſeek it moſt. Is any man under a clear conviction, by the light of the word, and his own ſenſible experience, that he is extremely weak, and utterly unable for any good word or work? This man, of all men, ſhould pray moſt. Manage your ſenſe of weakneſs, as a call to aſk much of this helping grace of God.

2. Surely, then, coming to the throne of grace for grace to help, muſt be hopeful work. If at any time Satan, or an ungodly world, ſhould tempt you, or your own heart fail you, in fears of the unprofitableneſs of ſeeking God, have this as a ready anſwer: "I am fit for nothing, his grace can help me in every "thing. Whither ſhould I go but to the throne of "grace? what can I beg there but his grace?" Say with David, Pſal. lvii. 2, 3. *I will cry unto God moſt high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He ſhall ſend from heaven, and ſave me. God ſhall ſend forth his mercy and his truth.* And will not theſe ſave any man?

Exhortation. I would give you a few directions in the practice of this duty of coming to the throne of grace for helping grace.

1. Come to ſeek this helping grace.
2. When you ſeek it, expect it.
3. When you expect it, receive it.
4. When you receive it, guide it.

Exhort. 1. Come to the throne of grace to ſeek helping grace. *Seeking* (as is already remarked) is not expreſſed in the text; yet it is plainly implied, both in the duty of *coming*, and in the bleſſings of *obtaining* and *finding*. You muſt ſeek grace to help you. Grace will not help to ſin, but helps againſt it; yet, bleſſed be God, grace can, and will help ſinners, otherwiſe we were in a forlorn ſtate indeed. Grace will not help to lazineſs, (that were an hinderance and no help); but grace will help lazy people, and help them out of it. To engage your diligence in ſeeking helping grace, I would ſhew you what help grace gives.

1. Grace helps to ſave you. If people come to the throne of grace, if men pray, and have not ſalvation in their eye, they come not aright, they pray not. *We are ſaved by grace*, Eph. ii. 5. Nothing but grace can ſave a ſinner: and if it were not the grace of God, and therefore omnipotent, it could not ſave. Is not it a great help, to be helped to ſalvation? Is not that a great lift, to be *delivered from the power of darkneſs, and* to be *tranſlated, into the kingdom of God's dear Son*: Col. i. 13. Who would not prize and deſire a ſaving lift of God's grace? All that have found it, value it: and they that never found it, ſhould (but will not) beg it earneſtly. *The grace of God brings ſalvation*, Tit. ii. 11. It brings it near to men in the goſpel. This is all that it doth to many. But to ſome this grace brings ſalvation, and gives it; plants it in their hearts, and waters it, and makes it grow with the increaſes of God, till it be ripe, full-grown ſalvation. Would you be helped to heaven? Imploy and implore the grace of God. It only can do it. And muſt not they periſh, and do they not periſh juſtly, that will not accept of ſaving grace, nor beg it, when they muſt periſh without it?

2. Grace helps to grace. All the grace that is given to us, is but a drop from the great fountain of grace that we make our application to. The firſt grace

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that is in us, is a gift and ſtream of that grace that is with him. That gracious change that is wrought on a ſinner, by which, of a graceleſs, he is made a gracious perſon; how do you think this brought about? There is a myſtery in it that a maſter in Iſrael did not know, John iii. 9, 20. No ſimilitude from the old creation can fully declare it; yet ſome of them are uſed in the word, and give them ſome light. This work of grace on the ungodly whom this grace falls on, is like a ſun-beam darted from the body of the Sun of righteouſneſs, upon a ſinner dead in ſins, that doth immediately quicken him, and enliven him. It is both light and life. It is all originally in Chriſt, and out of his fulneſs given to all that partake of it; John i. 4. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men*, John viii. 12. *I am the light of the world; he that followeth me ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the light of life*, ſaith our Lord Jeſus. Chriſt is ſuch a ſun that all on whom his gracious beams light, are ſaved. He quickens all he ſhines upon. Men periſh under the goſpel indeed; but it is becauſe the light of it ſhines only about them, and without them. 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. but not into their hearts. All the grace whereby any, and all the reedemed of the Lord, are converted, beautified, and ſaved, is from the higheſt ſpring grace in Chriſt: 1 Tim. i. 14. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* How came Paul by all the faith and love his bleſſed ſoul was filled with? All came from the grace of the Lord Jeſus. And every partaker of true grace will own the ſame original.

3. The helping grace which we ſhould aſk, not only helps to ſalvation and grace, but alſo helps grace itſelf. The grace received, muſt be refreſhed and watered, and made to grow by influences from the ſame fountain from whence it firſt flowed, or elſe it will wither quickly. Therefore we have the grace of God in the fountain to betake ourſelves unto, for the helping of his grace in us. For though grace as

in Chriſt needs no help; yet his grace given to, and dwelling in us, needs a great deal. The father of the lunatic, Mark ix. 22, 24, came to the throne of grace but ſorrily. What a marvellous change was wrought in him, and that ſuddenly? In his firſt addreſs he acted unbelief groſsly; in the next he acts faith, profeſſeth faith, and prays Chriſt's help againſt his unbelief. Many did caſt out devils in Chriſt's name; but none could help other folks unbelief, nor their own. His begging help againſt his unbelief, was the ſame prayer with that of the apoſtles, Luke xvii. 5. *Lord increaſe our faith.* And it gave more honour to Chriſt in his office of a Saviour, and did ſignify more, both of true faith in Chriſt, and of an honeſt heart in the man, than if he had addreſſed with the higheſt confidence to the Lord, to caſt the devil out of his ſon. The youth is lying wallowing and foaming, and torn by the evil ſpirit, in the ſight of his tender father: yet no ſooner doth the light of faith ſhine in his heart, but he ſeeth a devil of unbelief there alſo; and he firſt begs that Chriſt would caſt out that, and help his faith. For *helping of unbelief*, and *helping of faith*, is the ſame thing. He that ſeeks the helping of his unbelief, ſeeks the removing of it; and he that ſeeks the helping of his faith, ſeeks the increaſe and ſtrengthening of it. And both are done by the ſame hand, by the ſame act of grace, and at the ſame time, whenever and where-ever they are done. And as it is with faith, ſo is it with all the graces of the Spirit in believers; they do need help of his grace; and it muſt be ſought at the throne of grace. Can you ſay, *I repent?* add, *Lord, help my impenitence. I love?* ſay, *Lord, help its boldneſs, and blow it up to a flame.* Where the true grace of God is, there is ſtill ſome ſenſe of its weakneſs, and inclination after an increaſe therein; and ſome dependence acted on the Lord, *who began the good work, for performing it to the day of Jeſus Chriſt*, Phil. i. 6.

4. The grace of God *helps our infirmities*. Rom. viii.

viii. 26. If it were not written, we ſhould think it hard to uſe the expreſſion. If the Spirit of God plant grace in the heart, is not that fair? if he water his own plants, is not that fair? Nay, but, ſaith the apoſtle, he *helps our infirmities* alſo. Might not the Holy Spirit diſdain to have any dealing with the infirmities of his people? Yes, but he will not. If he take no care of our infirmities, we may, and muſt be loſt thereby. A criminal pardoned by an act of grace, may die of a diſeaſe, if not cured; may ſtarve of hunger and cold, if not provided with neceſſaries; may be ſlain by his enemies, if not protected. Senſe of infirmities ſhould make us beg helping grace.

5. Grace helps in all the work and duty we are called to. Without aſſiſting grace, the leaſt piece of work cannot be rightly done, and by its help any work may be done: 2 Cor. ix. 8. *God is able to make all grace abound towards you: that ye always having all-ſufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.* There is *grace, all grace,* and *it abounding* in God *toward his people.* From this given to them, there is *ſufficiency* and *all-ſufficiency,* and that *always* and in *all things;* and thence flows *good work, every good work,* and *abounding to every good work.* Like to this is his prayer, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight thro' Jeſus Chriſt.* We need grace's help in every good work. No work is truly good, but what grace helps us to. Grace and works agree ſweetly in this order. Grace begins, and works follow. Grace works on the man, and makes him a worker: grace paſſeth on the perſon and his works, and makes them accepted; and the accepted worker gives grace all the glory, both of his works, and of his own and their acceptance. Whence his help comes, thither his praiſes go.

6. Laſtly, Grace helps in extremities. But of this in the laſt thing in the text.

This then is the firſt exhortation, Come to the throne of grace, ſeeking helping grace. Enlarge and heighten the ſenſe of your need and weakneſs as much as you will, the ſupply to be had at the throne of grace is ſufficient: Phil. iv. 19. *My God ſhall ſupply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Chriſt Jeſus.* And in Paul's ſtyle, *glory* and *grace* change names frequently, Eph. i. 6, 12, 14. and iii. 16. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Exhort. 2. You muſt not only ſeek grace to help; but when you ſeek it, you muſt expect it. The text runs plainly this way. The apoſtle implies *aſking;* but expreſſeth *finding*, and *coming* that we may *find.* Therefore we ſhould come with expectation of finding. The ſpirit and life of prayer in faith, lieth more in expectation than in aſking. Unwiſe Chriſtians let out the life-blood and vital ſpirits of prayer, when they let their expectations languiſh. Here is a common, but unregarded error, in Chriſtians exerciſe. When they ſet their face to pray, they make ſome conſcience of ſearching out their wants; they labour to improve that ſight to the raiſing of fervent deſires of a ſupply of them: if they yet go higher, to take in a ſenſe of the fulneſs and freeneſs of that grace where their help is; yet how rarely are they careful to raiſe up expectations of that helping grace? Few can ſay, as Pſal. lv. 16. *As for me, I will call upon God: and the Lord ſhall ſave me.* ver. 17. *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he ſhall hear my voice.* Few can charge their ſouls as he did, Pſal. lxii. 5. *My ſoul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.* See how the prophet's faith roſe, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my ſalvation; my God will hear me. Looking* is a needy act of faith, *waiting* is an expecting act, and *aſſurance* is the higheſt. If you look to the Lord, you may quickly know he is the God of your ſalvation; if you know him as the God of your ſalvation, and your God, you will aſk earneſtly, wait patiently.

patiently, and by the ſame faith propheſy a gracious anſwer. What do you take praying in faith to be, James i. 6.? It is not only to pray, believing that we call upon the true God, in the name of Chriſt, and for things agreeable to his will: it is not only that we believe that he is able to give what we aſk; but that he will give what is good. But becauſe his grace to help, is not only good, and always good, but nothing is good without it, Chriſtians ſhould beg grace with confident expectations. What means Chriſt's frequent anſwer to men: Matth. viii. 13. *As thou haſt believed, ſo be it done unto thee?* and Matth. ix. 29. *According to your faith, be it unto you?* It is not to tell us, that he meaſures out his bounty to men, according, to their believing expectations from him? John xi. 40. *Jeſus ſaith unto Martha, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldeſt believe, thou ſhouldeſt ſee the glory of God?* Our way is, if we could ſee the glory of God, then we would believe. Chriſt's way is juſt contrary: we muſt firſt believe, and then we ſhall ſee the glory of God. We ſay, If the Lord would glorify himſelf in performing his promiſes, and in hearing our prayers, then we would believe ſtrongly. But this is inverting of Chriſt's order. Martha was a believer in Chriſt, and expreſſeth faith ſeveral ways in this chapter. It appears in the joint meſſage they ſent to Chriſt, ver. 3. *Lord, behold, he whom thou loveſt, is ſick.* Ver. 5. *Now Jeſus loved Martha, and her ſiſter, and Lazarus.* A bleſſed family, and few like it; all loved of Chriſt, and doubtleſs lovers of Chriſt. But they built more on his love to them, than on their love to him, like humble and wiſe believers: verſe 21. *Martha ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died.* Her ſiſter Mary ſaid the ſame, ver. 32. It is likely, that none ever died in Chriſt's preſence, when he was on earth; he cured all that employed him. *But I know, that even now whatſoever thou wilt aſk of God, God will give it thee,* ver. 22. Here was ſome faith. When Chriſt promiſeth,

miſeth, ver. 23. that *her brother ſhould riſe again*, ſhe acts faith as to the doctrine of the reſurrection, verſe 24. *I know that he ſhall riſe again in the reſurrection at the laſt day.* When Chriſt goes on in preaching himſelf, ver. 25, 26. and aſks her of her faith: ſhe anſwered bravely, *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Chriſt the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world*, ver. 27. A confeſſion like Peter's, Matth. xvi. 16. What then was wanting in this good woman? Why doth our Lord put ſuch an *if thou wouldeſt believe*, to one that did believe ſo much and ſo well? Becauſe notwithſtanding her faith in Chriſt's perſon, as the Chriſt, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; notwithſtanding her faith of his power; yet, in this inſtance of raiſing Lazarus, ſhe expected nothing. When Chriſt, verſe 39. bids *take away the ſtone*, ſhe ſaid, *Lord, by this time he ſtinketh: for he hath been dead four days.* She that believed Lazarus ſhould riſe at the laſt day, could not believe that he ſhould riſe after death had held him but four days. Such is the very nature of unbelief, or of weak faith in true believers; they can, or rather think they do, believe greater and harder things, when not much tried about them, better and more eaſily, than ſmaller and eaſier things that their faith is called to a preſent exerciſe about. Let all Chriſtians, in all their approaches to the throne of grace, behold this as written on the open gates to this throne, and hear it proclaimed by him that ſitteth on it, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldeſt believe, thou ſhouldeſt ſee the glory of God?* Some believers are apt to think, that a trembling fearing frame is fitter for them; and that raiſing of expectation of good from God, will prevent or hinder humility, and lying low before the Lord. But they are quite miſtaken that think faith and humility are inconſiſtent. They not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted: Hab. ii. 4. *Behold, his ſoul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the juſt*

juſt ſhall live by his faith. To bottom expectations of grace from God, on the account of any good, real or apprehended, in us, or done by us, is not only deſtructive of humility, but of faith alſo. A boaſter is an abominable creature at the throne of grace; but a pleader for, and expectant of grace, for grace's ſake, is an humble believer, and a right courtier at this throne.

Exhort. 3. You muſt not only ſeek grace when you come to the throne of grace, and expect it when you ſeek it, but you muſt be careful to receive grace when it is given. Make room for it. What is ſaid by the Lord in the prophet, Mal. iii. 10. tho' ſpoke in another caſe, is applicable to this: *I will open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room enough to receive it.* Felt want and ſtrong faith, make much room for the grace of God. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*, Pſalm lxxxi. 10. It muſt be a wide-mouthed ſoul that takes in, and a well-filled ſoul that receives a fill of God. How mighty is that prayer, Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.? We have all need not only to get it by heart, but to get in into our hearts, and to ſend it up to heaven daily from our hearts. Paul makes a ſpecial preface to that prayer, ver. 14, 15. In it he prays for *the ſtrengthning of the inner man, by the Spirit*, ver. 16. *That Chriſt might dwell in their hearts by faith*, ver. 17. *That being rooted in love, they might meaſure the dimenſions of Chriſt's love, and know it that paſſeth knowledge*, ver. 18, 19. Can any man go higher in prayer? Yes, one ſtep higher; *That ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God.* Now, who hath room in his ſoul for the anſwer of ſuch a prayer as this is? If we had not theſe mighty words in this way, we ſhould be tempted to think that it were rather a prophecy of what is to be enjoyed within the vail, than a prayer of faith to be put up by travellers in the way to heaven, and for bleſſings to be enjoyed in the houſe of their pilgrimage. But a prayer it is, and

ſome good performance is given within time; though the main meaſure of the anſwer of this (as of all the moſt ſpiritual prayers of ſaints in this life) is reſerved for the day of the Lord. It is a greater matter, both of duty and difficulty, than moſt Chriſtians think, to have the everlaſting doors of our ſouls lifted up, and caſt open, that the King of glory may enter with his ſuper-abounding grace. Many believers take much pains, and make many prayers, for that grace of God, which yet they receive not, when it comes, and craves room and admittance. Grace comes always in and with Jeſus Chriſt. Whatever therefore hinders his welcome, excludes his grace from entering. Grace comes in and by the promiſe. If the promiſe be not received by faith, how can the grace promiſed be received? Grace comes always as grace, free and undeſerved. How can a proud perſon receive it? And there is pride often working in the diſcouragements of Chriſtians. They find they want much of the helping grace of God: they aſk it, they ſee it in the promiſes, and in Chriſt's hand: but they think, Should ſuch as I lay hold on ſuch a precious gift as his grace? Why not? It is grace, grace offered of grace, given of grace. Do you need it? Why do you not receive it, and make room for it? Some receive not that grace that is tendered to them; becauſe it is not the particular grace they ſought, and expected, or becauſe it comes not to them in that way they looked for it in. Others receive not, nor welcome the grace they beg; becauſe they think they cannot receive it. They look on receiving as a great and difficult buſineſs, far above their ability. But is refuſing of it hard alſo? Alas! that is eaſy, becauſe natural to our hearts. Is not the ſeed of receiving in all ſincere aſking and expecting of grace from God? Receiving of his grace, is no more but a heart-willingneſs that his grace may enter in, and act like itſelf upon us. And this receiving act of faith doth greatly glorify God. Some think it very ſtrange, and hardly credible, that any believer

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can aſk earneſtly that grace, which when tendered he is not willing to receive. See how it was with ſome eminent ſaints: Job. ix. 16. *If I had called, and he had anſwered me; yet would not I believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.* Why ſo? *For he breaketh me with a tempeſt*, ver. 17. But may not fatherly love and correction be together on a believer? Rev. iii. 19. Yet the ſenſe of the ſmart of correction, is a ſtrong temptation to queſtion the love of the corrector. David, or Aſaph, Pſal. lxxvii. 1, 2, 3. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me.* Who would think that this man refuſed to be comforted? Did he not pray for conſolation? Yet he ſaith, *My ſoul refuſed to be comforted. I remembred God, and was troubled: I complained, and my ſpirit was overwhelmed.* There is a peeviſhneſs of unbelief that Chriſtians ſhould watch againſt.

Exhort. 4. You muſt take care to guide this helping grace of God, when you have received it. Guiding of grace, is an art and myſtery that Chriſtians ſhould ſtudy diligently. The rule of this art is this, Guide the grace of God received by you, for thoſe ends for which it is given by him. Now, what ends hath the Lord in giving of his grace? They are only two. 1. For the praiſe and glory of the giver. 2. For the benefit of the receivers. Guide his grace for thoſe ends, and you guide and uſe it well. Chriſtians have little of his grace, and complain ſorrowfully; not becauſe he gives, and they receive little; but becauſe they guide and manage this richeſt talent poorly. Dare any believer forbear to ſay, If I had kept all I had got, and guided well all he hath given, I had been far richer in grace than now I am? Miſguiding of grace received is the greateſt ſin, becauſe in abuſe of the greateſt bleſſing. Watch againſt it, if you love his glory, and your own weal.

II. I come now to the fourth and laſt thing in the verſe, about this grace of God; and that is, *the ſeaſon-*

ableneſs of its help. It helps always, but eſpecially *in time of need.* On this I ſhall now only note ſome few things in general.

Obſ. 1. Whatever believers preſent caſe be, a time of need may come; and they ſhould foreſee it. Tho' they know not particular circumſtances, yet they ſhould lay their account with it. The Lord gives faithful warnings in the word; faith ſhould take them. We ſee the times of need that many others come in; and we ſhould take warning by their experience. Every Chriſtian hath found times of ſpecial need formerly; the like may come again.

Obſ. 2. Chriſtians ſhould pray before the time of need come, for that grace that may help them when it comes. The prophet ſpeaks of *hearing for the time to come*, Iſa. xlii. 23.; the apoſtle, 1 Tim. vi. 19. of *laying up in ſtore a good foundation for the time to come.* So here, men muſt pray for the time to come. *Is any man afflicted? let him pray*, James v. 13.; and becauſe any man may be afflicted, he ſhould pray before-hand.

1. Becauſe we know not but we may be ſurpriſed by a time of need; our Lord's argument, Mark xiii. 33. *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* The Lord rarely gives particular warning of the time when ſpecial need is coming. It ordinarily comes by ſurpriſe to us. Death may, but ſickneſs, loſſes, and affliction, uſually come on ſuddenly: and ſurprizing trials are ſore and ſearching ones.

2. We ſhould pray before a time of need come; for often when that time comes, we are thereby diſabled for prayer. The diſtreſs may be ſuch, that even a believer can do nothing. The *night may come, when no man can work*, John ix. 4. Pray much before it come.

3. Becauſe many prayers have their anſwer delayed till a time of need comes. Chriſtians think, that every day and hour of their life is a time of need, (and

ſo

ſo it is in ſome ſenſe); but there are ſome ſpecial ſeaſons of great need, of which the Lord is the only diſpoſer; and he fits ſuch times with diſpenſings of that grace that his people have many a day begged before. There may be worſe reaſoning than this. "It "may be there are ſome bleſſings of grace, that I have "oft ſought, and have not yet got, that are reſerved "for me by the Lord, againſt a time when I ſhall need "them more than now I do."

Thus you ſee, in the ſcope of the apoſtle in theſe words, that there is ſtrong arguing for conſtant ſeeking of God's grace. You are either at preſent in a time of ſpecial need; or if it be not preſent, it may come. Whatever caſe a believer is in, his obligation is in a manner equal to this great duty, of *coming to the throne of grace, for grace to help him*, as his matters do require.

SERMON X.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

YOU have heard that the gracious exhortation in the text, to coming to the throne of grace, is directed with reſpect to the getting of two great bleſſings, or of one under two names, God's *mercy* and *grace*. Concerning this grace I have ſpoken to three things. 1. What this grace is. 2. What the finding of this grace is. 3. What is the helpfulneſs of this grace ſo found. I alſo entered upon the fourth

fourth and laſt thing, the ſeaſonableneſs of this helping grace.

The truth I am to ſpeak to, is this.

Doct. *The grace of God is ſpecially helpful in times of ſpecial need.*

My work then is to ſhew,
1. What are thoſe times of need.
2. What the helpfulneſs of grace in them is.

Only I would uſher in this diſcourſe, with a general conſideration of the conſtant need that all ſtand in of God's mercy and grace. And that I would branch into four. We need God's mercy and grace, as creatures, as men, as ſinners, and as Chriſtians; and that always.

1. As creatures. The native notion of a creature is, that it is a contingent, neceſſitous being: *For his pleaſure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. The Lord did not make all or any creature becauſe he needed them; but he made them that they might need him. He did not build this glorious fabric of heaven and earth, as a *houſe to dwell in*, or to *contain him*, 1 Kings viii. 27.; but he made this world as a ſtage, on which to diſplay his glorious wiſdom and power: and he made ſome of its inhabitants, angels in the upper rooms, and men in the lower, to be ſpectators and praiſers of his glory. It is not proper to ſay, that creatures needed their being before the Creator gave it: For when there was nothing but God, there could be no need. Need and want is eſſential to a creature, and ſprings up with their being. As ſoon as the creation received its being by *the word of his power*, it needs upholding by the ſame power: Heb. i. 3. our Lord Jeſus *upholds all things by the word of his power*. The whole creation would fall back immediately into its mother Nothing, if the ſame power that

that gave it a being did not every moment preſerve it. Would you have a joyful view of heaven and earth; Look on all as in our Lord's hand. Why do the heavens keep their courſe? Why doth the ſun ſhine ſo glorioufly, move ſo regularly, and influence the earth ſo virtuouſly with his light and heat? It is becauſe Chriſt *upholds all things by the word of his power. He is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt: all things were created by him, and for him,* Col. i. 16. 17. Many are *without Chriſt in the world,* Eph. ii. 12. Many ſee daily the works of creation and providence, and never think on Chriſt as the head of all. But it is no wonder, that men that have no eyes to ſee Chriſt in the new creation of grace, connot ſee him in the old creation of nature. We, as creatures, are needy of God's helping grace in favour: for *in him we live, and move, and have our being,* Acts xvii. 28. *In his hand our breath is, and his all our ways are,* Dan. v. 23.

2. Our need of God's grace appears yet more, as we are ſuch creatures, men. We are, through the bounty of God, the moſt conſiderable part of this lower creation. Of man ſome underſtand that elegant phraſe, Prov. viii. 26. *The higheſt part of the duſt of the world.* But there is no earthly creature needy of God's grace but man, even in his natural frame, abſtract from his ſinful ſtate. The great Former of all things hath given to all a being, and to many of his creatures no more. To ſome of his creatures he hath given life, a nobler ſort of being. But to all living creatures, but man, he gives no more, and they need no more; they have not, they need not eternal life. When *the breath* of the other living creatures, *goes downward,* as the word is Eccl. iii. 21. there is an end of them. But man is created in that ſtate, that he muſt be for ever, and therefore be eternally happy or miſerable. This ſtate he is made in, makes him vaſtly needy of God's grace and mercy.

3. We

3. We grow yet more needy as ſinners. Sinners are creatures, with this great blemiſh, of guilt, ſin, and corruption. A ſinner is needy of a Mediator to deal for him with God; for he cannot deal with God for himſelf. A ſinner is needy of the righteouſneſs of another to recommend him to God's acceptance; for he hath none of his own. The righteouſneſs of a ſinner is a plain contradiction. And unleſs the power of ſin hath blinded men in the right knowledge of God, and of themſelves, and unleſs it had puffed up their hearts in this darkneſs, there had never been any pretence made by fallen men to ſelf-righteouſneſs. But now nothing is more common, more groundleſs, and yet more rooted in mens hearts, than that a ſinner can, and may, if he will, bring or do ſomewhat that may have ſome intereſt in, and influence on his acceptance with God. A ſinner is needy of a right to eternal life: and this muſt be brought by another; for he can never purchaſe it for himſelf. He is needy of ſafety from the wrath to come, which is ſo wofully well deſerved by him; and the man can do nothing of himſelf, but what deſerves it more and further.

4. We are needy of the help of grace as Chriſtians, as new creatures. A Chriſtian is a creature by nature, a human creature, a ſinful creature; but made a new creature by grace. Yet there are ſome ſprings of conſtant need of grace, in this new creature, the Chriſtian.

1ſt, The neceſſary and conſtant dependance of the new creature on its fountain and author, makes a Chriſtian to be a very needy creature. The dependance of the beams on the ſun is not more neceſſary, than the dependance of a Chriſtian on Chriſt: *Without me* (or *ſeparate from me*) *ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. The Chriſtian's life is by a continual efflux from Chriſt; and is to be ſought and maintained by a conſtant dependance on him, as light from the ſun. Never was there, nor can there be a room ſo full of light from the ſun-beams, but if either the ſun with-

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draw his light, or if you exclude its light, by closing doors and windows, it immediately becomes dark, and that necessarily. It is so with all Christians. If it were not that the new covenant hath assured us, that there shall be no final and total separating of the fountain, from the stream, there would soon be an expiring of all that good that is in the best of saints.

2*dly*, A Christian is always a needy creature; because he hath much work to do, and most necessary work, and all above his strength. He that hath most work, and least strength, is most needy of help: Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* If the exhortation or command had been without the argument, it had been discouraging. What can a man do about his own salvation? *It is God that begun a good work in them, and will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6. Put hand to your work; for help is near. As the exhortation, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, hath the height of duty in it; so the argument, *For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, doth deeply debase man's sufficiency, and highly advance both the sovereignty and efficacy of his assisting grace. And happy is that Christian, who can lay the weight of the command on his conscience, and can at the same time improve the encouragement for believing obeying. Whoever is void of sense of his need of God's assisting grace, looks not rightly on the great work lying before him, and seeth not the great weakness that is in him: 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.*

3*dly*, In this great work above his strength, the Christian meets with much opposition, both from within, and from without: not always in the same measure; but some always. Special measures of opposition, make times of special need; of which I shall

ſpeak. But there is ſomewhat of oppoſition that is conſtant: Gal. v. 17. *For the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh: and theſe are contrary the one to the other; ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This *fleſh* and this *ſpirit* is in all Chriſtians. If a man were all *fleſh*, he were no Chriſtian; if he were all *ſpirit*, he would be perfect, as the ſaints glorified be. This *fleſh* and *ſpirit luſt and ſtrive* one againſt the other: and ſo they muſt do; for they are *contrary the one to the other.* The effect of this *luſting* and *contrariety* is, that the Chriſtian *cannot do the things that he would.* He cannot do all the *fleſh* luſts to, becauſe of the *ſpirit's* oppoſition; he cannot do all the *ſpirit* luſts after, becauſe of the oppoſition of the *fleſh.* Of this combat the apoſtle ſpeaks largely from his own experience, Rom. vii. And the more oppoſition a Chriſtian meets with, (and I have named but one head of it), the more needy he is of helping grace.

4*thly*, The Chriſtian's ſtate of abſence from the Lord, renders him a needy creature. He is made for the Lord; framed ſo, that, as a Chriſtian, nothing ſhort of being for ever and immediately with the Lord reigns in his heart as his prize and mark, 2 Cor. v. 2. 4. *In this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be uncloathed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life.* What ails a believer to groan ſo oft and ſo deeply? It is to be in heaven with the Lord. And the more heavenly and holy a Chriſtian be, the more frequent and earneſt are theſe groanings. He hath the moſt healthy ſoul, who is ſick of love: whoſe heart is ſick with deſires of being *preſent with the Lord.* The believer that is moſt aſſured of heaven, groans deepeſt. Unbelievers run on in ſin, and ſing to hell; while hell groans for them: and ſad will the meeting be. We find Paul groaning for himſelf, only for two things; *the body of ſin and death*

death its dwelling in him, Rom. vii. 24. and his *dwelling in the body*. We do not, nor can we know the vaſt difference that is betwixt the happy ſtate of the ſaints in heaven, and the beſt ſtate of believers on earth. We do but gueſs in the dark; and our gueſſes are but negative; that they are removed from all the evils we find here; no ſin, no clouds, no death, no crying, nor any thing to complain of. But theſe negatives taken in by faith and experience, with the foretaſte and firſt fruits of that good land, make believers groan to be poſſeſſed of it, although they go, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. *not knowing whither*. Heaven will be a bleſſed ſurpriſe to all the poſſeſſors of it. They will find it a far better ſtate than their higheſt thoughts and largeſt deſires could point forth.

But, beſides theſe ſprings of conſtant need, there are ſpecial ſeaſons of Chriſtians need of God's grace. And they are eaſily known by this general rule. That time that comes on a believer, wherein he is in great and ſpecial danger, from which only preſent ſupplies of grace can preſerve him, that is a ſeaſon of ſpecial need of grace. And in the proſpect of, or in ſuch ſeaſons, Chriſtians ſhould ply the throne of grace.

Of ſuch times of need, I would ſpeak to ſix of them. 1. The time of temptation. 2. Of a ſpiritual decay. 3. Of high enjoyments and attainments. 4. Of affliction. 5. Of ſpecial duty and ſervice. 6. Of dying. Theſe are all ſeaſons and times of ſpecial need of God's grace. And how ſuch render Chriſtians needy of grace, and how helpful his grace is in ſuch times, is all I mind to ſay on this ſcripture.

I. The firſt time of need, is *the time of temptation*; *An hour of temptation*, Rev. iii. 10. *A time of temptation*, Luke viii. 13. *A day of temptation*. Pſal. xcv. 8. But becauſe temptation is of large ſignificaton, and of ſundry ſorts, and from various quarters, I ſhall confine myſelf to that ſort that is from Satan. And on this head would confine myſelf to theſe three. 1.

What temptation is. 2. What need of grace to the tempted. 3. How grace helps in time of temptation.

1. *What is temptation?* As we are concerned in it, three things are in a temptation. An outward object, the occaſion; inward corruption, that is as fuel for the temptation; and Satan's motion to ſin, and his working on theſe two, to hatch ſin. He is but twice called *the tempter;* firſt, when he came to Chriſt, Matth. iv. 3.; and again, when he comes to Chriſtians, 1 Theſſ. iii. 5. Theſe three are not neceſſarily in all temptations. In his tempting the firſt and ſecond Adam, there was only an outward object, and a motion of Satan. But in all men beſides, theſe three are in all temptations. And the Spirit of God in the word gives the name of *temptation* to all of them: 1 Tim. vi. 9. *They that will be rich, fall into temptation.* Few either of the poor or of the rich believe this. James i. 14, 15. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin: and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.* Hence the difficulty is great in diſcovering Satan's hand in tempting; becauſe there is inward corruption in men, that acts and works of itſelf, as well as it is fit to be acted upon by Satan. If temptation from Satan came to a ſinleſs man, the tempter might be eaſily known: but when it comes to a ſinner, who hath an active principle of corruption in him, that prompts him to the ſame ſin that the tempter tempts unto, it becomes very hard to a man to ſay, "This motion is of the devil;" and, "This is of my own corrupt heart." And here ſeldom doth the devil get his due. Some blame the devil more than he deſerves, and excuſe themſelves more than they ſhould; and ſome excuſe the devil, and blame themſelves more than they ought. What ſhall we do here? How ſhall we know when temptation riſeth from corruption within, or from the devil without? There is no very great need to know it exactly; as in ſome caſes it is very hard to know it.

Tempta-

Temptation is ſo natural to us, that if the devil be the firſt mover, it ſeizeth ſo quickly on our corrupt heart, that we may juſtly take the blame to ourſelves. The working of the Spirit of God on the new creature, and of the ſpirit of Satan on the old man, are great myſteries. It is far wiſer work to ſet about reſiſting of our ſpiritual enemies, than to perplex ourſelves with queſtions about their order. Therefore,

2. *What need is there of the grace of God to help the tempted?* This is plain. Every one that is in this caſe knows his great need of grace. Yet, to make them that are not in it pity them that are, and to direct them that are in it to entertain a deeper ſenſe of their need of God's grace, I would ſhew how needy a perſon under temptation is of the helping grace of God. This appears in theſe.

1*ſt*, Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt commands us to pray againſt temptation. He doth not ſo command us to pray againſt affliction. In that pattern of prayer, Matth. vi. 9.—13. (the words whereof are better known, than the deep ſenſe and meaning of the words is underſtood), there are but two petitions for ſpiritual bleſſings for ourſelves. One is, for the pardon of ſin, that relates to the ſtate of our perſons: the other is, for ſanctification and preſervation; and that is expreſſed thus, *Lead us not into temptation.* Sanctification is prayed for, in praying againſt temptation; and much of ſanctification is acted in making ſuch a prayer. But may not a man enter into temptation, and come well out of it again? Yes. But, in that caſe, more thanks is due to the Lord's grace and mercy, than to his own good conduct. Chriſt would have you to be afraid of temptation, and to pray againſt it: Matth. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Whatever temptation a man ruſheth confidently upon, he uſually falls by. In temptation, no believer is ſafe, but the ſelf-diffident and fearful; and fear of temptation acts in praying againſt it. Peter failed in his fearleſſneſs. His going to the high

high prieſt's hall after the warning his Maſter gave him, was ruſhing on a temptation; and ſo came on it. It muſt therefore be a caſe wherein one is very needy of grace to help that Chriſt bids us pray againſt.

2*dly*, We find the whole armour of God is provided and prepared on purpoſe for the caſe of temptation, Eph. vii. 10. 13. The apoſtle is ſounding the alarm of war to all Chriſtians. He ſhews them where their ſtrength lies, ver. 10. *Be ſtrong in the Lord and in the power of his might.* He ſhews them their weapons of war, ver. 10.—19. and tells them how to uſe them. Their armour is that of God. No armour but that that is from heaven, is proof againſt the batteries and aſſaults of hell. How doth the devil laugh at, deſpiſe, and pierce through that ſoul, whoſe armour is forged and framed on earth? This armour of God the Chriſtian muſt *put on*, and *take to himſelf*. It is not enough that he know it, and have it lying by him. It is no armour to him, till it be put on by him. And why ſuch armour, and ſo put on? ver. 12. Becauſe of ſuch dreadful enemies as we have to deal with: *For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood*, (enemies formidable and dangerous ſufficiently againſt them that have no more but fleſh and blood to oppoſe them with), *but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.* What but the whole armour of God can ſecure a poor believer from all the armies of hell?

3*dly*, Our bleſſed Lord Jeſus *himſelf was tempted, that he might ſuccour them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18. There are ſeveral ſtates and conditions that believers are in that Chriſt himſelf was never in. We are oft ſick and weak in body; Chriſt was always in ſound and perfect health of body: for ſickneſs is a conſequent of inherent ſin, and corruption of nature; and of that Chriſt had none. Many particular diſtreſſes we meet with, and wreſtle with, that Chriſt knew not by his own experience. But this ſad caſe of temptation

tation he knew and felt. But, ye may ſay, if Chriſt had never been tempted, had he not been able to ſuccour them that are tempted? Yes, no doubt; for no bounds can be ſet to his divine power as God. What then doth his experience of temptation ſignify to the ſuccour of the tempted believer? It is the ground of his ſympathy with them; and ſympathy draws forth his helping grace. It is a ground for the faith of the tempted to act upon. How ſweet is this thought to a Chriſtian thus exerciſed: "I am "indeed a tempted believer; but I have a Saviour "that was tempted himſelf, and remembers it ſtill, "and pities them, and will help them that are in that "caſe, that was once ſo grievous to himſelf?"

4*thly*, A tempted perſon is needy of God's helping grace, becauſe ſin came in at firſt by temptation. Temptation was the door that ſin came in by, and entered into the world of mankind. How ſin came in upon the angels that fell, is deeper than that we can know it. And it is no great matter for us to be ignorant of it. We know they are now the worſt, and moſt wicked, and moſt miſerable of all the creatures; and that originally they were of the moſt eminent order (as one well ſaid, "The Lord wiſely would not "declare the nature of that diſeaſe he was reſolved "never to cure." And ſo we muſt leave it in the dark. But as to ſin's coming into the world of mankind, we have more light. The Lord created the root of mankind upright and perfect, firſt the man, then the woman. In their created ſtate, there was no ſin in either of them. But temptation was ſo applied by Satan, that it quickly begot ſin. This argument the apoſtle uſeth, 2 Cor. xi. 3. *I fear, leſt by any means, as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt.* If Satan did prevail to bring in ſin by temptation upon the ſinleſs and perfect; what may he not do on ſinners, in whom he hath ſo much intereſt, and over whom

whom he hath ſo great advantage by ſomewhat of his own in them?

5*thly*, There is great need of the grace of God in a time of temptation, becauſe of the frequent ſad effects of temptation, unleſs preſent help of grace be given. Rarely doth a temptation and our hearts meet but ſome fire of ſin is kindled. I would name a few of thoſe effects of temptation.

(1.) Temptation doth often diſcover hid and unſeen evil, and brings it to light. It brings forth that which the perſon, before the temptation, never thought was in him. So it is with the ungodly, and the godly themſelves. When Hazael was told by the prophet Eliſha, what miſchief he would do to Iſrael, he ſaid, 2 Kings viii. 13. *But what, is thy ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do this great thing? But* (ſaith Eliſha) *the Lord hath ſhewed me, that thou ſhalt be king over Syria.* "Then thou wilt have power and will to do "it." What wickedneſs will not that man do, whom Satan tempts, and whom God leaves? David fell dreadfully by temptation. And ſo did Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. *Howbeit, in the buſineſs of the ambaſſadors of the princes of Babylon, who ſent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.* When the veſſel is broached by a convenient temptation, that liquor will come out that was never thought to be within. When *Herod feared John and obſerved*, or *preſerved him;* when, on his *hearing him, he did many things, and heard him gladly;* who would have thought he would have beheaded him? Mark vi. 20. 21. But a *convenient day came;* a day when Herod lay fair for temptation: and a day that Satan, and Herodias and her daughter, his ſervants, laid the temptation before him: then the poor wretch was ſoon overcome. But indeed it was more ſtrange, that ſuch a king as Herod ſhould hear ſuch a prophet as John Baptiſt preach, than that he ſhould murder him. At laſt, it is, and hath been far more uſual

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to bad kings, to ſlay prophets, than to hear them gladly. Peter was ſo confident in his courage, that in a manner, (though againſt both grace and good manners), he gives the lye to his Maſter, Mat. xxvi. 31,—35. *Then ſaid Jeſus unto them, All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me this night.* Ver. 33. *Peter anſwered and ſaid unto him, Though all men ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended.* As if he had ſaid, "Lord, at leaſt except me out of this "all thou ſpeakeſt of." Becauſe he would not take the general warning, Chriſt gives him a particular one, ver. 34. *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Verily I ſay unto thee, that this night before the cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice.* Will not Peter believe Chriſt ſpeaking ſo peremptorily and plainly? No: ver 35. *Peter ſaid unto him, Though I ſhould die with thee,* (or *for thy ſake,* as John xiii. 37.), *yet will I not deny thee. Likewiſe alſo ſaid all the diſciples.* So loth and backward are even godly men to own that to be in them, that they do not ſee and feel at preſent working in them. Theſe words Peter and the reſt ſpoke, (bating that awful fear that ſhould have ſeized on them, from ſuch a warning as Chriſt gave them), were words of duty; and were doubtleſs the honeſt expreſſions of their preſent thoughts. Yet when the temptation came, Chriſt's warning took place, and their reſolutions vaniſhed like ſmoak. They *all forſook him and fled.* Peter followed afterwards and denied him ſhamefully. The voice of a damſel overthrew this man, that had courage to draw his ſword in his Maſter's defence againſt armed men, John xviii. 10. He denied he knew his dear Maſter; when, if he had owned him, and himſelf as his ſervant, there was no danger. John was there, and at the croſs too, without any harm.

(2.) Temptation often brings on a great and ſudden damp and eclipſe on the work of God's grace in the heart. It is as the ſmoak of hell in the ſoul, that darkens the room; ſo that a believer cannot ſee

what of God is in him. It is, as Chriſt calls it, Luke xxii. 31. *a ſifting a man as wheat.* Wheat, and chaff, and duſt, are then mingled together. No believer in this caſe can give ſuch a clear and diſtinct account, nor have ſo plain a diſcovery of God's work in him, as before and after the temptation. Chriſtians give the devil the advantage he ſeeks, when they judge of themſelves and their ſtate in the fit of a temptation. Act grace diligently when in temptation, and try your ſtate as carefully as you can when you are out of temptation.

(3.) Temptation increaſeth greatly and ſuddenly ſeen and known corruption. If temptation come on a latent hid corruption, it may bring it forth: but if it come on a known corruption, though it was not ſo powerful before, temptation will make it rage. The temptation came on Judas. For as hateful as his name is juſtly to all Chriſtians; yet, before he fell, no man ſuſpected him; only Chriſt knew him. When Chriſt gave the warning, John xiii. 21. that *one of the twelve ſhould betray him*; all the eleven ſaid, *Is it I?* And at laſt the traitor ſaid ſo; and was anſwered, Matth. xxvi. 21,—25. The luſt the devil acted on, was his covetouſneſs. He was a thief, a lover of money; and the devil put him at laſt upon a bargain that was his ruin. For a ſervant to betray his maſter, and ſuch a maſter; for a ſinner to ſell the Saviour of all ſinners that are ſaved, for ſo inconſiderable a ſum, after ſo fair a warning of his ſin and ruin by it, was a proof of the mighty power of temptation over a man. The apoſtle Peter chargeth Ananias thus, Acts v. 3. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lye to the Holy Ghoſt?* The *filling of his heart* was Satan's work, as Peter ſaith: Why then doth he aſk the man an account of, or charge him with Satan's action? Becauſe the devil can fill no man's heart with a ſinful purpoſe, till the man give way to, and comply with the devil's working.

3. *What*

3. *What is that help that grace gives to the tempted?* We have heard how temptation renders a man needy of grace; now let us conſider how this grace can, and doth help in this caſe. Paul, in his temptation, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. betakes himſelf to the right courſe? to prayer to the Lord; and *thrice he beſought the Lord, that it might depart from him.* He is anſwered, *My grace is ſufficient for thee.* We would be apt to think, that Paul's great ſtock of grace, and manifold experience, and his late extraordinary enjoyment, might have been ſufficient to have ſupported Paul in his conflict. No; they could not. Our Lord ſaith not, "Thy grace is ſufficient for thee, which I "have abundantly beſtowed on thee;" but, *My grace is ſufficient for thee.* So the apoſtle exhorts another, 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus;* and Eph. vi. 10. There are many *enemies of the grace of God,* becauſe few are partakers of it. Such as have not felt the power of it on their own hearts, will always pick quarrels with the pure doctrine of grace. Some cannot receive this plain goſpel-truth, That a man muſt be conſtituted righteous in the ſight of God, only through the righteouſneſs of another perſon, even Jeſus Chriſt, imputed to the ſinner of free grace. And ſome that own this truth, ſtumble again on this other truth, That the ſanctification of a juſtified believer flows from the conſtant ſupplies of grace from Chriſt their head and root. They think, that there are habits of grace implanted in the new creature, (and this is not to be denied); and if they guide well what they have received in the grace of regeneration, they may live well, and grow on to perfection. But it is not duly minded in mens ſpiritual exerciſe, that no ſtock of grace was ever given to any believer, to take him off the ſenſe of his need of daily dependence on the original grace in Chriſt Jeſus. But the greateſt receivers always act their dependence moſt humbly, and ſee their need of it moſt clearly, and find the benefit of that dependence moſt comfortably.

Obſerve alſo our Lord's argument for the encouragement of Paul: *For my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.* What is Chriſt's *grace* in the anſwer, is Chriſt's *ſtrength* in this argument; what is *ſufficiency* in the one, is *making perfect* in the other. As if Chriſt had ſaid to Paul, "I ſee the devil is too hard for thy "weakneſs; but thy weakneſs ſupported by my "ſtrength, ſhall be too hard for Satan." Now, ſee how Paul improves this anſwer, *Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* No wonder he *gloried in Chriſt*, and in Chriſt's grace beſtowed on him: for that any Chriſtian can do: but this *glorying in infirmities*, is an exerciſe of grace only found with ſuch fathers in Chriſt as Paul was. Who is not humbled, and afraid of his infirmities? Here is a believer that glories in them. But why? and how? *That the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* Infirmities as infirmities, having nothing in them to excite glorying: but infirmities as opportunities for diſplaying of the glory of Chriſt's grace in helping under them, are to be gloried in. Chriſt acts on them, and the ſenſible believer employs him therein. Our weakneſs is the field his ſtrength is glorified in. Whoever doth not own his infirmities, forfeits the aſſiſtance of the grace of Chriſt. The grace that helps in temptation, is Chriſt's grace: the employing of him for it, and drawing it from him, is by faith, and ſhould be the Chriſtian's work.

How doth this grace help the tempted believer?

1*ſt*, In diſcovering of Satan's wiles and devices, Eph. vi. 11. He hath *fiery darts*, verſe 16. and he hath *wiles* alſo. His moſt dangerous temptations are his moſt cunning ones. This ſerpent hath his *ſubtilty*, 2 Cor. xi. 3. The leſs they be perceived, the more dangerous temptation is: and the more clearly they are ſeen, the more eaſily they are overcome. The apoſtle owns this in 2 Cor. ii. 11. *Leſt Satan ſhould get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.* Satan gets greateſt advantage of them that

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are (and becauſe they are) *ignorant of his devices.* The caſe the apoſtle ſpeaks of, is that of the inceſtuous Corinthian. He had ſinned greatly; the church had not reſented it as they ought. Paul, in his firſt epiſtle, chap. v. chargeth them for their want of zeal, commands them to caſt out that ſcandalous member. The Lord bleſſeth that letter and his advice, both to that church and to the offending perſon. Now, here lay *Satan's device:* he that had puffed them up with pride and ſecurity in their former carriage toward that offender when impenitent, ſeeks alſo to ſtir them up to an uncharitable ſeverity towards him, when renewed again unto repentance. And of this kind are many of his wiles. He drives men to extremes on each hand. Thus many profeſſors are like the devil's footballs, kicked about from one extreme to another, and ſeldom are kept in the right midſt. The devil keeps men aſleep in ſin as long as he can. If they awake againſt his will, he runs them on deſpair; if faith be wrought in them, he labours to make them turn the grace of God into wantonneſs. The inſtances of his devices are innumerable. The multitude and danger of his wiles muſt be great, if we conſider, 1. His created ſtate: a ſpirit more knowing than man. A ſinleſs angel is a higher creature than ſinleſs Adam was. 2. By his fall he hath loſt happineſs and purity; but retains his knowledge, which his corruption hath turned into craft, malice, and wiles. 3. His long experience in cheating of men. 4. That in men that his wiles are propoſed to. It is to *the heart, deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. It is to *the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts*, Eph. iv. 22. Such a devil dealing with ſuch a deceitful heart, muſt have many dangerous wiles. Chriſt's grace only can enable a man to diſcern them; and it ſhould be much prayed for. Many have been ſkilful in the theory and knowledge of the doctrine of Satan's wiles that have been notwithſtanding, prevailed upon by them. A man muſt know his

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own heart well, and obſerve its motions narrowly, and be much at the throne of grace, that would know Satan's particular wiles on himſelf.

2*dly*, Grace helps the tempted, in helping to hate the ſin they were tempted to. Many believers, though they cannot tell from whence the wind comes that drives them, whether from their own heart, or the devil; yet they know whether it drives them; to ſin that they are averſe from. Tempted Joſeph ſpake like a man that had preſent aſſiſtance of grace, when he ſaid, Gen. xxxix. 9. *How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* As far, and as long, as the ſin tempted to, ſtands black and ugly in the eye of the tempted perſon; ſo far, and ſo long, is the temptation ineffectual. Temptation prevails, when the ſin tempted to takes with the heart and will; James i. 14. *A man is tempted*, (*i. e.* ſucceſsfully,) *when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.* Sin was without him, but near to him by the temptation; now it is within him, and it is his ſin. The temptation to numbering of the people took with David; but his command about it was *abominable to Joab*, a man far ſhort of David's grace, if he had any, 1 Chron. xxi. 6.

3*dly*, Grace can help the tempted to *reſiſt and ſtand*, Eph. vi. 13. No man is overcome of Satan till he flee and yield. Reſiſting is overcoming of him: Jam. iv. 7. *Reſiſt the devil, and he will fly from you.* 1 Pet. v. 9. *Whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the faith.* Eph. vi. 16. *Above all taking the ſhield of faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.* They are *darts*, they are the *devil's darts*, they are *fiery darts*, there is an *all* of them; yet by faith you may be able to *quench* them all. Why is ſo much ſaid of faith? Becauſe, as Chriſt's ſtrength is the believer's ſtrength, ſo faith is that only in a believer that acts on this ſtrength, draws it in, and acts in it. Separate faith from its object, Chriſt, either in juſtification or in ſanctification, and it becomes an imagination, a vanity, a nothing.

Now,

Now, conſider how cunningly Satan deals with believers and how ſimply they are gulled by him in temptation. He perſuades and often prevails with them, to lay aſide *the ſhield of faith*, when they ſhould mainly uſe it. How fooliſh were that man that would yield his arms to an implacable enemy? Chriſt knew Peter's danger, and provides graciouſly for it: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32.

4thly, The helping grace of God aſſiſts tempted believers, in preventing an utter foil by Satan, and in recovering them from a begun foil. So did Chriſt for Peter; and Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. The devil never gets all his will on a believer: nor are any wounds he gives to a ſaint, mortal in the iſſue; whatever they be in their own nature, in believers fears, or in the devil's deſign. All the glory is due to the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus.

5thly, *Laſtly*, Grace can rebuke the tempter, and call him off. This Joſhua the high prieſt needed and got: Zech. ii. 2, *And the Lord ſaid unto Satan*, (who was *ſtanding at Joſhua's right hand to reſiſt him*, when he is *ſtanding before the angel of the Lord*, ver. 1.) *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath choſen Jeruſalem, rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* This mercy was the firſt thing in Paul's prayer, 2 Cor. xii. 8. *For this thing I ſought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* This meſſenger of Satan was of Chriſt's ſending and giving: *There was given to me a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan to buffet me*, ver. 7. "Lord ſave us from "ſuch gifts," will Chriſtians be apt to ſay. There is no reaſon to pray for them. If the Lord ſee them needful, he will ſend them. But it is comfortable, that all the devil's aſſaults are of Chriſt's ordering. He muſt have Chriſt's leave to tempt, Luke xxii. 31; and our Lord, when he pleaſeth, can, and will call him off. When Chriſt was tempted, Matth. iv. he reſiſts all his temptations, by the word, as his peo-

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ple ſhould: at laſt he put forth his divine power, ver. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan,* &c. *Then the devil leaveth him,* ver. 11. This we cannot do, but Chriſt can do it for us. It is a bleſſed promiſe, Rom xvi. 20. *The God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly. The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you. Amen.* Poor tempted Chriſtians think, that they are not only in Satan's ſieve, and in his hands, but that they are often under his feet. But lift up your heads by faith on this promiſe. Compleat victory is coming; and the faith of it ſhould not only encourage you to reſiſt, but this faith is a preſent victory: *Faith is victory,* 1 John v. 4. The believer (not only ſhall be, but) is an overcomer.

SERMON XI.

Heb. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE Lord hath been pleaſed ſo to order and determine the ſtate and condition of his children, while they are in this life, that they ſhall be conſtantly needy. This diſpenſation we ſhould ſubmit unto with all quietneſs of mind, not quarrelling with the wiſdom and mercy of our God therein. Yea, more than ſubmiſſion is called for. There is a further duty required though it be hard to perform it, to take pleaſure and to rejoice in this needy ſtate, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon us. For as the Lord hath laid us, or left us, under manifold neceſſities; ſo

ſo hath he laid up, and is ready to lay out, of his grace for helping us under them. And ſurely ſuch wants as lay us open for thoſe ſupplies of his grace, will be found to have a great deal of mercy in them, in the iſſue. The exhortation in the text implies, that grace can help in every time of need. There are ſome times of need, contrived by the Lord on purpoſe, that the helpfulneſs of his grace might the more ſhine and appear. I was ſpeaking laſt day from this truth, *That there are ſome ſpecial neceſſitous times, in which believers are ſpecially needy of Chriſt's grace, and in which his grace is ſpecially helpful.*

I have ſpoke to the firſt of theſe times of need: *A time of temptation.* Though all believers be not always tempted; yet there is no ſaint on earth who is out of the devil's gun-ſhot. No ſaint on earth hath reaſon to expect, that (if I may ſo ſpeak) God ſhould ſerve the devil with a *Noli proſequi.* God gives not, in this life, an utter diſcharge to the devil, from meddling with, or moleſting of any ſaint. Till we come to heaven, this adverſary muſt be expected and prepared for. This world is his dominion; he is the *wicked god* of it, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And all the wicked in it, are his people, ſubjects, and children: and all the remaining corruption in the ſaints, is of the devil.

II. The ſecond time of ſpecial need of God's grace, is *the time of ſpiritual decay;* a decay in the new creature, a decay in the work of God in the heart. This paſſeth under many names in the word, and well known in the ſenſe and experience of believers. Sometimes it is called *darkneſs*, Iſa. l. 10. It is the miſery of a natural ſtate, that they that are in it, are *darkneſs.* It is the bleſſedneſs of a renewed ſtate, that the partakers of it *are light in the Lord.* Their duty is, to *walk as children of light*, Eph. v. 8. Though they that are made *light in the Lord*, are never ſuffered to become darkneſs again; yet they may *walk in darkneſs, and have no light;* and the *days of that darkneſs* may be *many*, as the wiſe man ſaith, Eccl.

xi. 8. We all know what natural darkneſs is. All the natural light of the world is from the ſun; and therefore natural light and darkneſs, day and night, have their viciſſitudes and revolutions, according to the ſhining or not ſhining of the ſun. All the ſpiritual light believers have, is from the light of God's countenance. As *the Sun of Righteouſneſs* ariſeth on them, Mal. iv. 2. or withdraws from them, ſo is their ſpiritual day or night; ſo do they walk in darkneſs, or in the light of the Lord. Sometimes this decay is called *death*, and *deadneſs*; a ſtate of inability and inactivity, for working and doing what they are called to. Hence ſo many prayers for *quickening*, eſpecially in Pſal. cxix. Natural death we know not; but ſickneſs, weakneſs, and fainting, we do know. Spiritual death is known and felt by none that are under its total power; but a weakneſs in ſpiritual life, ſaints do know.

Of this decay I would ſpeak, in handling three things. 1. Whence it comes. 2. How needy ſuch are of God's grace. 3. How grace doth help in it.

1. *Whence comes this decay on Chriſtians?* Is a ſtate too common to be queſtioned, and too plain to need to be proved, that true Chriſtians are, and may be in it. I would name ſome of its ſprings and cauſes.

1ſt, It flows from the infant, infirm ſtate of the new creature, in its firſt forming. It is a *new born babe*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. When the firſt man was made, he was as perfect and ſtrong a man the firſt hour he was made, as ever he was in all his life. He came out of his Maker's hands a perfect man. But the new creature is born a weak thing, and is to grow up to *the ſtature of a perfect man in Chriſt*, Eph. iv; and will never come to its full growth, till it come to heaven. None on earth knows what a perfect Chriſtian is. There are degrees of perfection on earth; in reſpect whereof ſome are leſs, ſome more perfect. But the moſt perfect labour greatly under imperfection, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. and preſs moſt after perfection. I will not

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ſpeak of the wiſe deſign of God, in framing the new creature thus. Only the glory of its preſervation, and of its perfection, is not due to the new nature in believers; but to the original of it, God the Father; to the bleſſed root thereof, Jeſus Chriſt his Son; to the inhabitation of the Spirit; and to the great ſecurity of the new covenant.

2dly, The new creature is not only in an infant, weak ſtate, but it is planted in a bad and unfit ſoil for it. It is planted out of its element. Heaven is the proper element and country whence the new creature came, whence it is maintained, and whither it natively tends. But it is planted here in the heart of a ſinner. Now, the heart of a man, though mended by grace in part, is a very unfit and unſuitable ſoil for ſuch a foreign heavenly plant, as the new creation is. And hence it is, that the grace of God in us is endangered by the place of its reſidence.

3dly, There is alſo much corruption remaining in the heart of a believer, as noiſome weeds growing near this precious planting of the Lord. The Lord never deſigned to root all corruption out of the hearts of his people in this life, by the firſt planting of his grace in them; but only to give that grace that ſhall break the dominion of ſin, and that ſhall maintain a war with indwelling ſin, and at laſt ſhall prevail compleatly. So that it is plain, that on the account of thoſe three, if there were no more, Chriſtians are very liable to ſpiritual decays. And it is ſadly confirmed from frequent experience. It may be in ſome, the work of grace was in beſt caſe when it was firſt begun; and that, from the day of their converſion to the day of their being glorified, they never had much of any remarkable growth. But this is their ſin, and their ſhame.

2. Hence you may ſee, *how needy ſuch perſons are of the help of the grace of God.* An inward decay in the work of his grace in us makes us very needy of help from the fountain of grace in him.

For this decay gives great advantages to our ſpiritual enemies to attack us, and lays us under great diſadvantages in reſiſting them. I am apt to think, (I cannot now give the reaſons of it), that the devil knows the frames of our hearts, though he does not know the heart immediately: that is God's property, Acts i. 24.), and the condition of the work of God in us, a great deal better than we ourſelves ordinarily do. Great is the intimacy he had with our ſpirits, eſpecially with the remaining corruption in them. Great is his craft, acquired by obſervation, practice, and experience, as well as by his malicious ſagacity. And when he ſeeth a believer in a bad caſe, if he have permiſſion, he will improve that deſired opportunity to make their bad caſe worſe. Pſal. lxxi. 11. 12. David prays for haſty help from God, on this argument, his enemies ſaying, *God hath forſaken him: perſecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him.* Caleb and Joſhua encourage Iſrael to go in and poſſeſs the land, Numb. xiv. 9. by this, *Their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.* It is from this bad caſe that believers are in, that Satan hath ſo eaſy and ſpeedy victory over them at ſome times, more than at other times. When it is well with the new creation within, Chriſtians can keep the devil at a bay and ſtand; when it is otherwiſe, he prevails immediately; we are diſarmed, and his darts pierce and enter. There is ſome ground to ſuſpect, that David's heart was not in ſo good a frame as uſually, ſome time before his foul fall, 2 Sam. xi. As to Peter, it is plain, his vain ſelf-confidence gave Satan an opportunity to ſift him, as he did.

3. *How doth the grace of God help in a decayed ſtate?*

1*ſt*, Grace helps in preſerving life at the root. There is ſome witneſs for God kept up. *I ſleep, but my heart waketh*, ſaith the bride, Song v. 2. It is well all was not aſleep. *The ſpirit is willing, but the fleſh is weak*, ſaith meek Jeſus, in his agony in the garden

garden, to the three diſtempered diſciples, Matth. xxvi. 31. Theſe ſame three ſleep in the mount of transfiguration, Luke ix. 32. and in the garden of agony. Paul found this witneſs preſerved in his captivity to the law in his members, Rom. vii. 23.

2*dly*, Grace helps under a decayed ſtate, by making a ſecret growth downward: A growth, that the believer cannot feel in himſelf, and that others cannot quickly perceive; yet it is real growth, and will in God's due time appear. We commonly value moſt that growth in grace that hath fair bloſſoms and fruit, appearing to our comfort, and to the Lord's praiſe before others. And it is indeed deſirable, and to be ſtudied, Matth. v. 16. John xv. 8. But there is a growth that may be carried on in the root only, in the rooting grace of a Chriſtian: as in clearer diſcoveries of indwelling ſin in the heart, and in more ſelf-diffidence and ſelf-diſtruſt. Paul had this fruit, 2 Cor. i. 8. 9. It is a ſad thing, that many Chriſtians are ſo fond of themſelves, of the good that is in them, that the Lord ſeeth that nothing is ſo fit to cure them of this, as leaving them to themſelves. And when this leaving of them to themſelves hath brought them to a diſcovery of themſelves, and that diſcovery hath wrought a diſtruſt of themſelves, and that diſtruſt hath taught them faith in God; then the Lord hath reached his end on them, and will change his way with them.

3*dly*, Grace can revive the decayed ſtate of a believer: Pſal. xxiii. 3. *He reſtoreth my ſoul. He reneweth their ſtrength*, Iſa. xl. 31. *Thy youth is renewed like the eagles*, Pſal. ciii. 5. This is inpoſſible in nature, and as to our bodies; but as to our ſouls, and the work of God in them, it is what is promiſed, and often done. Old people may, and do often, in their folly and vanity, counterfeit youth; but all their arts cannot make themſelves one hour younger. But the Lord can renew the youth of the new creature, and make it better with him than ever it was. David

prays

prays for it, Pſal. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right ſpirit within me.* Peter got a new converſion, Luke xxii. 32. They both had been converted and renewed before; but they fell under a ſad decay, and needed this reſtoring grace, and got it.

So much of the ſecond time of need. I proceed to a third not ſo common.

III. *A time of ſpecial enjoyments*, is a time of ſpecial need of God's helping grace. You may think it ſtrange, but it is true, that they that receive moſt of the Lord's gracious bounty, ſtand in moſt need of grace to guide it well. Concerning this ſeaſon, I would ſpeak in five particulars.

1. Moſt Chriſtians know what thoſe enjoyments are by experience, although in various meaſures. It is very ſuſpicious, that that perſon is an hypocrite, that is always in the ſame frame, let him pretend it to be never ſo good. The true Chriſtian's ſky is never long clear, and without clouds. Change of weather and ways, is uſually found by travellers to heaven. It is to be ſuſpected, that he is not right who *hath no changes*, Pſal. lv. 19. Theſe ſpecial enjoyments are of ſeveral ſorts.

1ſt, There is ſome ſpecial nearneſs to God enjoyed by Chriſtians at ſome times. We are not at all to be offended at, but rather confirmed by the reproaches of the ungodly, that are utter ſtrangers to ſuch enjoyments, and cannot endure nor underſtand the ſcripture-names of ſuch bleſſings that they themſelves are unacquainted with. What is more frequent in the word, than this nearneſs to God? What is better known in the experience of ſaints than this nearneſs? He makes gracious approaches to mens ſpirits, and cauſeth them to approach to him, Pſal. lxv. 4. They find it good for them, Pſal. lxxiii. 28. The firſt, gracious change wrought on a ſoul, is by bringing a diſtant ſinner near to God: Eph. ii. 13. *But now in Chriſt Jeſus, ye who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh*

nigh by the blood of Chriſt. "Whenever the vir-
"tue of that blood came upon you by the Spirit
"of Chriſt, God came near to you, and you were
"brought to God." But beſides this nearneſs that is begun in the firſt application of grace, and changeth their ſtate; there is more nearneſs given by the Lord, and enjoyed by his people, for the cheering of their hearts, and bettering of their frame. Exerciſed Chriſtians are able to give a diſtinct account of their having of this nearneſs at ſome times, and of their want of it at other times. How much of both are in the Pſalms of David? And ſuch as can underſtand the nearneſs to, and diſtance from God, ſo frequently mentioned there, as only the pſalmiſt's ſenſe of God's favourable or croſs providence towards him in outward things, are to be pitied for their ungodly ignorance, and deſpiſed for their expounding the words of a man after God's heart according to the carnal ſentiments of their own.

2dly, There are effuſions of the Spirit ſpoke of in the word, and found by Chriſtians, which are ſpecial enjoyments. Sometimes they are found in the performance of ſpiritual duties of worſhip; ſometimes in the exerciſe of grace. Grace ſhould be acted in all duties of worſhip; but it may be, and ſhould be acted out of any formal duty. You ſhould never pray, but there ſhould be acting of faith and love on Chriſt. But, God be thanked, you may act faith and love when ye do not pray, when you are about no ſettled ſpiritual duty of worſhip. There is a *being in the fear of the Lord all the day long,* Prov. xxiii. 17. A *walking up and down in the name of the Lord,* Zech. x. 12. A *doing of every thing in the name of the Lord Jeſus,* Col. iii. 17. Every believer hath the Spirit of Chriſt: *If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his,* Rom. viii. 9. But there are ſome ſingular pourings out of this Spirit promiſed and beſtowed, and well known by believers? and they are precious enjoyments. *This Spirit the world cannot receive; be-*

cauſe

cauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you, as Chriſt ſaith, John xiv. 17.

3*dly*, There is communion and fellowſhip with God much ſpoke of in the word, well known by believers, 1 John i. 3. But I ſhall name no more of theſe enjoyments.

2. As all Chriſtians know what theſe ſpecial enjoyments are, ſo all of them do greatly deſire them. This is ſo ſure, that many do over-deſire them. This deſire ariſeth,

1*ſt*, From the genius and inſtinct of the new nature. What is more natural to the new creature than kindly breathing after heaven? When a poor ſoul hath got of the water of life from Chriſt, it *becomes in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life*, John iv. 14. Immediately the ſoul ſaith, "What ſhall I do to be ſaved? when ſhall I be ſaved?" Now, if deſires of heaven be the native breathing of the new creature; ſurely breathing after much of heaven upon earth muſt be ſo too; for the higheſt enjoyments of God on earth, are far ſhort of what is reſerved for heaven.

2*dly*, Experience of firſt love, and of the firſt gracious welcome he gave to the believer, when he firſt fled to the city of refuge, makes them deſire more of thoſe enjoyments.

3. Theſe ſpecial enjoyments are very profitable, as well as pleaſing. They are given for profit, and do uſually profit.

1*ſt*, They are ſupported under tribulation: *In the multitude of my thoughts within me*, (and doubtleſs they were ſad ones), *thy comforts delight my ſoul*, Pſalm xciv. 19. Uſually *much affliction*, and *joy of the Holy Ghoſt*, are together, 1 Theſſ. i. 6. The promiſes are fitted for diſtreſs, and the performance of them given to Chriſtians under it. Some diſtreſſes are ſo great that nothing can bear up under them, but a ſpecial appearance of divine grace; and in that caſe ſuch bleſ-

bleſſings may be more importunately begged.——

2*dly*, Special enjoyments do fit and ſtrengthen for work and ſervice. There is a *joy of the Lord* that is the believer's *ſtrength*, Neh. viii. 10. Elijah's double meal was to ſtrengthen him for a forty days journey in the wilderneſs; and the extrordinary manifeſtation he had of God, was to fit him for his tranſlation, 1 Kings xix. Many ſaints have found this ſo often in their experience, that they do with fear receive ſingular enjoyments of God, becauſe they have ſo oft found them followed with ſome ſpecial trial and difficulty.

4. Although moſt Chriſtians have ſomewhat of theſe ſpecial enjoyments, and all deſire them, and they be profitable in themſelves; yet ſpecial ſpiritual enjoyments are dangerous, and render a man very needy of the helping grace of God.

1*ſt*, Becauſe they do uſually expoſe to ſpecial temptations. Satan is a conſtant enemy to all Chriſtians. But there are two times eſpecially that he would faineſt aſſault the believer; when he is at his worſt, and when he is at his beſt. Let believers be never ſo low, if Satan get his will, he would bring them lower. No man is as low as the devil would have him, but he that is in hell; but thither he cannot bring a believer. If a Chriſtian be never ſo high, if the devil be let looſe upon him, he will quickly bring him down. Do not think, that the devil will fear to engage a believer, even when in his beſt ſtate. He that had the boldneſs to fall on ſinleſs Adam in paradiſe, will think it an eaſy matter to deal with any ſinful man in this wilderneſs. He that had the impudence to tempt our almighty ſinleſs Saviour, will he have either modeſty or fear in tempting a feeble believer? You whom the Lord makes at any time to ride on your high places, bleſs him, and yet fear your adverſary.

2*dly*, There are ſome ſpecial corruptions that are apt to grow under ſpecial enjoyments, as weeds by warm ſunſhine. If there were any ſuch enjoyment of God to be found in this life as would remove corrup-

tion altogether out of the heart, there would be no fear of abuſing it: but now, when the greateſt enjoyments that can be had in this life, are given to them that have a body of death dwelling in them, there are ſome workings of that remaining corruption that are very ready to appear in this caſe. As,

(1.) Pride of heart; ſpiritual pride. All pride is a ſpiritual ſin; but pride that riſeth on ſpiritual bleſſings received, is ſpecially ſpiritual pride. Pride on the account of beauty of body, or ſtrength, or riches, is a carnal fooliſh pride. If it riſe on the account of gifts and endowments of the mind, it grows yet a worſe pride. But if the gifts of God be yet of a more high and noble kind, as his ſpecial love, and the precious fruits of that love in begun conformity to Chriſt, and communion with him; if pride riſe on ſuch grounds it is yet the worſt of all ſorts of pride. For the more gracious the gifts of God be, and the more eminently they be of free diſtinguiſhing grace, and the more plainly the deſign of God in giving thoſe gifts be to glorify the grace of the giver, and to ſave the receiver, to the praiſe of that grace; pride of heart on the account of ſuch gifts, is yet the worſt of all pride. Now, that ſuch a corruption may grow under ſpecial enjoyments of God, is paſt all doubt. 2 Cor. xii. Paul ſpeaks of his being lifted up unto heaven, like a man that had not fully recovered himſelf: *I knew a man in Chriſt above fourteen years ago, (whether out of the body, or in the body, I know not: God knoweth)*, ver. 2. It was a long while ſince; but in the time of the enjoyment, and fourteen years after it, he could not tell whither he was in or out of the body. He never ſpeaks plainly of it till he came to ſpeak of his infirmities, ver. 7. *Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan to buffet me, leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure.* Where, we may perceive plainly, that whatever was in that extraordinary enjoyment Paul had in that viſion from heaven,

heaven, or in that viſit to heaven, that was allowed him; when he came back, he found the ſame heart he had formerly felt, and the ſame body of death he ſo often had groaned under before. Although we know not what Paul enjoyed in that time, nor what the nature of that exerciſe by Satan was that he was put to: yet the Lord's deſign, and Paul's danger, is plain. It is indeed a marvellous paſſage. Such an extraordinary perſon as Paul was, the chief of the apoſtles, and moſt eminent ſaint in all the new teſtament, after ſuch a great revelation, muſt be exerciſed with hell, to prevent harm by his being in heaven, before he was fully ready and fit for heaven.

(2.) Contentedneſs with a preſent good condition, and dulneſs of deſires after a better ſtate, is a common corruption that is apt to riſe up under ſpecial enjoyments. If the diſciples be on the mount of transfiguration, and Chriſt be glorified in their ſight, and glorified ſaints from heaven in his company; then *it is good to be here*, ſay they; not minding that which was more needful for them and all the church. And if they heard (as is moſt likely) the diſcourſe of Moſes and Elias concerning *the deceaſe* of our Lord *which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem*, Luke ix. 30, 31. they were the more faulty. It is very hard to be truly deſirous of heaven, when we have much of heaven on earth; yet it may be attained, and grace can help to it. Of which in the laſt place.

5. The grace of God, as it is needed, ſo it is uſeful and helpful to believers under ſpecial enjoyments.

1*ſt*, Grace can humble the ſoul under them, and by them. Though Satan make them temptations to pride, the Lord can ſanctify them to be means of humbling. Great comforts do not natively tend to humble us; but all diſcoveries of the glory of God are humbling. Iſaiah found it ſo, Iſa. vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone; for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts.* The viſion was great and glorious; it was a ſight of God in Chriſt; as John xii. 41. *Theſe*

things ſaid Eſaias, when he ſaw his glory, and ſpake of him. We would be apt to think the prophet ſhould rather have ſaid, "Happy am I, that I have ſeen now "what I never ſaw before, what few, if any, beſides "me, have ſeen." But ſuch was the impreſſion the Spirit of God made on the heart of this man, that this extraordinary manifeſtation of God affects him with more deep ſelf-abaſement than ever he had before. Happy is the man that lies ſtill the more low in himſelf, and before God, the more highly the Lord exalts him. Job found this fruit of a clearer diſcovery of God, chap. xlii. 5, 6. *Jacob* (in Gen. xxxii. 30.) *called the name of the place Peniel: for I have ſeen God face to face, and my life is preſerved.* This place where he wreſtled all night with the Lord, where the Lord bleſſed him in the morning; this place he calls *Peniel*, to be the name of it to him and his ſeed; that whenever they ſaw the place, or heard of it, they might remember, that there the great God and a poor man met in great familiarity, and the man was not conſumed. Jacob wonders, that his life was preſerved in ſuch a meeting. Near approaches of God to his children, are ſometimes too hard for them to bear. This made one eminent ſaint cry out under ſuch a high enjoyment, "O Lord, deſtroy me not with thy "glory;" and another, "Hold thy hand, O Lord; "thy ſervant is a clay veſſel, and can bear no more." And both theſe were perſons not oppreſſed by his wrath, but overcharged with his love and glory.

3*dly*, Grace can help to record and remember ſpecial enjoyments. There are ſome ſpiritual enjoyments of God, that are like lightning, that dart from the one end of heaven to the other, that make a dark night to become like the morning. They come quickly, and they are quickly gone; they are of ſpeedy acceſs, and of as ſudden a receſs. But though they be but ſhort in their continuance, their fruit may remain. And one way for making their fruit continue, is, to remember and record them. *I will remember the years,*

the

the works, the wonders of the Lord, Pſalm lxxvi. 10, 11, 12. *I will meditate, I will talk of them*, ſaith the ſaint. Thus David prays for Iſrael, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. *Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.* What was this he prayed for Iſrael's remembering of, and for the Lord's keeping in their minds? It was, that they might remember with what joy they made their willing offerings for the ſervice of God. We have a gracious promiſe of Chriſt, John xiv. 26. *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* And this promiſe we ſhould plead, for bringing to our remembrance the things Chriſt hath done for us, as well as what he hath ſaid to us. And no man can imagine (but they that feel it) how one of theſe remembrances will fortify the ſoul in a day of diſtreſs. Spiritual things are ſo unlike to carnal things, that all compariſons betwixt them muſt needs halt greatly. That a poor, hungry, ſtarving man, ſhould, in a dungeon, or deſolate wilderneſs, be refreſhed, and made ſtrong, by the bare remembrance of a feaſt he had ſeven years ago; this is impoſſible in nature. But in ſpiritual things it is otherwiſe. The ſavoury remembrance of a ſpiritual enjoyment long ſince paſt, can bring back the taſte, and power, and virtue of it, to the ſoul that wants it. Believers are uſually upon their recovery from a ſad diſconſolate ſtate, when they are exerciſed in remembering with ſavour their former enjoyments. Thus ſaith returning Iſrael, Hoſea ii. 7. *I will go and return to my firſt huſband: for then it was better with me than now.*

3*dly*, Grace can help to improve enjoyments, to deſires of, and endeavours after perfection. We muſt not ſay, when it is well with us, *It is good to be here*; but rather, *It is good to be there, where it will be a great deal better.* Phil. iii. 13, 14. *This one thing I do*, (it muſt be a great thing doubtleſs that is Paul's *one thing*), *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reach-*

reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark, &c. There is a *forgetting* that is our duty; and a *remembering* that is our duty alſo. To *remember*, ſo as to ſupport our faith, and feed our praiſing of the Lord, that is duty: but to *forget* attainments, ſo as to preſs after the mark, that is another duty. Alas! we are bad, both at right *remembering*, and right *forgetting*. You and I think, that if we had but a little of what Paul had in one day; if we had but a little of what he had that night he lay in the ſtocks, when he *prayed, and ſang praiſes unto God*, Acts xvi. 25. we could never have forgotten it as long as we had a day to live. But Paul could forget all in his ardent deſires of perfection. And ſo muſt you; and this grace can teach you.

Theſe ſpecial enjoyments of God are but rarely felt. Doat not on them, neither deſpiſe them. Mock not ſuch as know them in their experience though ye do not. If you be found believers, ye may live in your ſouls, and live to his praiſe, without enjoying any thing very extraordinary. But if the Lord grant ſingular communications of himſelf, know that it is a ſeaſon of ſpecial need of grace to guide them well. They would return more frequently, and would riſe and ſpring higher, and laſt longer, if they were better improved. The greater the bleſſing be, the more provoking is the abuſe of it; the greater the bleſſing be, the greater is the difficulty of guiding it well: and the more difficulty be in our work, the more is our need of the grace of God; and the more frequent and fervent ſhould our applications be to the throne of grace for that needful grace.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

HAVING ſpoke of the need of God's grace, and of its helpfulneſs in general; I came to condeſcend on ſome ſeaſons wherein the grace of God is ſpecially needful and helpful. Of them I named ſix; three of which I have ſpoke to, and the other three remain to be handled.

1. The firſt ſeaſon named, was *the time of temptation.* There was never a believer ſo little beloved of Chriſt, as to be given up as a prey to Satan; and never lay a believer ſo near Chriſt's heart, but the devil may get him into his ſieve. Therefore let us never flatter ourſelves in a ſtate of ſecurity from diſturbance by the devil. Bleſſed be God, we are brought into a ſtate of ſafety from ruin by him.

2. A *ſeaſon of ſpiritual decay:* ſoul ſickneſs, a weakneſs in the new creature. There are ſome people that never knew by experience what bodily ſickneſs means, but have enjoyed perfect health all their life. But I am apt to think, that few, if any Chriſtians find it ſo as to the new creation in them.

3. A *ſeaſon of ſpecial enjoyments.* Though theſe two ſeem to be very far from, and contrary to one another; yet they agree in this, that in both grace is needful and helpful. The unaccountable wiſdom and ſovereignty of the Lord our God, ſhines in his conduct of his people. Some of them have extraordinary receivings; others know little what they mean. There

There are ſome Chriſtians, whoſe way to heaven lies all along in the depths and in the vales, when others ride on their high places. Now, theſe ſingular manifeſtations from God, though deſirable and profitable, yet are not without ſpecial dangers. To prevent which, the Lord provides and miniſters ſpecial phyſic to them: and it is ſtrong and pleaſant; but the phyſician can bleſs it; as Paul's experience witneſſeth, 2 Cor. xii. He had been in heaven he knew not how; he had heard he could not tell what when he came back. But he well knew what he met with on his return, and how needful and uſeful it was for him. Leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure with what he had ſeen and heard in paradiſe, hell is ſent to humble him. May we not infer this, How unfit are believers, while in the body, and a body of death is in them, to be in heaven, when any ſpecial enjoyment of heaven muſt have ſo dreadful a remedy adminiſtered to prevent hurt?

IV. A fourth ſeaſon of ſpecial need of grace, is *the time of affliction.* Afflictions are of many ſorts and kinds. I am apt to believe, that though there be ſome likeneſs in the afflictions of many, yet every afflicted man hath a particular affliction of his own. As it is with people's faces, ſo it is with their croſſes. For as many thouſand faces as are amongſt mankind, though all are ſomewhat like, yet every one hath ſome diſtinction. The world is full of croſſes; yet every afflicted perſon hath his own croſs. Our Lord hints at it, Matth. xvi. 23. *Let a man take up his croſs.* The Lord appoints a proper croſs for every one: though people are ready to think and ſay, that their croſs is unfit for them, and that they would bear another croſs better. In croſſes we muſt neither chuſe nor refuſe. David's caſe was ſingular, 2 Sam. xxiv. The Lord chuſeth for us, and we muſt not, cannot refuſe: Job xxxiv. 33. *Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompenſe it, whether thou refuſe, or whether thou chuſe, and not I: therefore ſpeak what thou*

thou knoweſt. There is a general diſtinction of afflictions. Some are *from God's hand*, for *ſin*, or *trial*, or *prevention:* and ſome are *from man's hand*, for *Chriſt's ſake*, and the *goſpel's*. In all of them grace is helpful and needful. But I would ſpeak only ſomething in general, that every one may apply to themſelves according to their experiences and exerciſe; and that on theſe two heads. 1 The needfulneſs of grace to the afflicted. 2. The helpfulneſs of grace to the afflicted whatever their affliction be.

1. I would ſpeak of *the need of the grace of God to the afflicted.* Some ſenſe of this is engraven on the hearts of men by the light of nature. The Heathen mariners in the ſtorm expreſs this, Jonah i. 5, 6. *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe, call upon thy God, if ſo be that God will think upon us, that we periſh not.* A ſad caſe! A Heathen ſhipmaſter challenging a godly prophet for his neglect of ſeeking God! He calls him by a ſhameful, but well-deſerved name, *O ſleeper.* The ſtorm came on for Jonah's ſake, as he told them. ver. 12.: yet he is the ſecureſt perſon in the ſhip. He only knew God, yet he is laſt in calling on him. An honeſt Pagan may outdo a diſtempered prophet, in ſome things, at ſome times. This ſenſe was expreſſed greatly by the king, nobles, and inhabitants of Nineveh, Jonah iii. 5.—10. And they again go far beyond Jonah. They *believed God* on Jonah's preaching, *repented*, *prayed*, and *faſted;* and *the Lord repented of the evil.* But Jonah was not grieved at all, chap. iv. 1, 2. If it were not for his excellent prayer, chap. ii. and that he was a prophet of the Lord, and the penman of the Holy Ghoſt, to record his own ſin and ſhame, for the benefit of the church; we ſhould be tempted to queſtion this man's grace, of whoſe fearful ſins we have ſo large an account. He rebels againſt the Lord's call to preach to Nineveh. When he flees, the Lord overtakes him by a ſtorm, takes him by the lot; he is caſt into the ſea, ſchooled in the whale's belly three days and three nights; a mira-

culous chaſtiſement, and a miraculous preſervation. He now obeys the repeated call. But when his labour had a gracious effect, he is diſpleaſed exceedingly, and prays moſt ſinfully. Jonah's inſtance ſhould teach miniſters and Chriſtians to pray more, *Lord lead us not into temptation.* As nature's light teacheth afflicted people their need of the Lord's grace and mercy, the word declares it more plainly, James v. 13. Pſal. l. 15. Hoſ. v. 15. This need of the helping grace of God in affliction, I would inſtruct in theſe.

1*ſt*, Affliction-ſins are readily fallen into without the help of the grace of God. Such ſins, I mean, that affliction doth eaſily and naturally tempt unto; as fretting, impatience, murmuring, and quarrelling with the hand of God. It is ſadly and frequently ſeen, that affliction hath not only brought along with it diſcovery of ſin, but alſo the actings and workings of more corruption, than either the perſon himſelf, or any elſe, thought was in the man. It was a ſad character of a very bad man, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. *And in the time of his diſtreſs did he treſpaſs yet more againſt the Lord: this is that King Ahaz.* This is a man noted for a never-do-well. A brother in the ſame office, and in the ſame iniquity, ſaid, *Behold this evil is of the Lord; what, ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33.

2*dly*, Affliction-duties are only practicable by the help of the grace of God. Every croſs hath its work, as well as its trial. There is that required and called for in affliction, that craves a ſpecial aſſiſtance of the grace of God for the doing of it. It is remarkable, that the great duty of the afflicted is expreſſed by two negatives, Heb. xii. 5. from Prov. iii. 11. *My ſon deſpiſe thou not the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* What then is the poſitive duty? It is that which is neither of theſe two. If the affliction be light, we are apt to deſpiſe it; and if it be heavy, we are as apt to faint under it. But, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, ſee that ye do neither. If it be

be never ſo light, do not deſpiſe it; if it be never ſo heavy, faint not under it. And there is no ſmall need of grace to preſerve us from thoſe extremes, and to keep us in the right midſt.

3*dly*, The conſolations of an afflicted ſtate are very needful, and grace only can furniſh us with them. Be ye aſſured of it, that never did a Chriſtian bear up patiently under God's heavy hand, but by the ſtrong ſecret working of ſome conſolation. It is true, we value and ſeek moſt that conſolation that comes in as a great flood of ſenſe, and that doth ſwallow up the bitterneſs of affliction. This the Lord can, and ſometimes doth give to his people. But there is a ſecret, ſilent ſpring of conſolation, that is as profitable, and more common in the Lord's way with his children. Of this the apoſtle ſpeaks in 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 5. *Everlaſting conſolation, and good hope through grace*, are his bleſſings, 2 Theſſ. ii. 16, 17.

2. *Wherein doth the helpfulneſs of grace conſiſt, in an afflicted ſtate?*

1*ſt*, God's grace helps with light to know God's mind in affliction. It is dreadful to be ſtruck in the dark, when a man neither ſeeth the path he walks in, nor the hand that ſmiteth him, nor the weapon he is ſmote with. The great bleſſing that grace can help us to, is, to know what the rod means, what its voice is, who hath appointed it, and what of God's name is written on the rod, Micah vi. 9. Job was very earneſt for this light, Job x. 2. *I will ſay unto God, Do not condemn me; ſhew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me.* Elihu adviſeth him well, Job xxxiv. 31, 32. *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have borne chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more. That which I ſee not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* Many a poor believer has been put to this, that if he had all the world, he would have parted with it, to have known God's mind in his afflictions. Sometimes by the light of the furnace, we come to know our hearts and corruptions; and there-

by what God ſmites for, and calls to. The Lord can, by the teachings of his word and Spirit, and by the wiſdom of his providential diſpenſations, engrave that particular meaning that is in his heart, on the rod that is in his hand, that men may know it. And happy is that perſon that is ſo dealt with. But it is indeed harder, to be ſincerely willing to know and admit of God's mind in affliction, than it is to find it out. But his grace can help to both, and the throne of grace ſhould be much plied for both.

2*dly*, Grace can give in ſtrength and ſupport under affliction: 2 Cor. iv. 16. *For which cauſe we faint not; but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* It is a wonderful thing, to ſee how much pain, ſickneſs, and torment, a poor frail body is able to bear. We think how cloſe and ſtinking a thing is life, that is not ſqueezed out by ſuch a ſtreſs. Yet the frailty of the fleſh, in bearing the diſtreſs of the fleſh, is a ſmall thing, in regard of the frailty of the heart in hearing of God's rebukes: Prov. xviii, 14. *The ſpirit of man will ſuſtain his infirmity; but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* Yet many have borne it; but ſurely by divine ſupport. It is the common ſenſe of deſtreſſed Chriſtians, that they have been put to bear ſuch burdens; that they thought at firſt would ſurely have cruſhed them. The reaſon of their wonder is, becauſe the weight of the burden upon them was ſenſible; but *the everlaſting arms underneath them* and their burden, were not ſeen, Deut. xxxiii. 27.

3*dly*, Grace helps in affliction, by enabling the afflicted to believe, that there is love in the afflicter. He ſaith it, Rev. iii. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten;* and he can make us believe it. Nothing but his mighty grace can do it. Nothing is liker anger than affliction, eſpecially when ſevere. Nothing is more difficult to believe, than that which, to all our ſenſe and reaſon, is ruining to us, ſhould be in love in him that doth it. Who can believe this without

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the help of grace? and how great muſt that help be, that enableth a man to believe ſo unlikely a thing?

4*thly*, Grace helps in affliction, by teaching to profit thereby: Heb. xii. 11. *Now no chaſtening for the preſent, ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them which are exerciſed thereby.* The fruit of ſanctified affliction is a great myſtery, as all ſpiritual fruit is. You cannot tell how you profit by the word. I am afraid, that there is but little profiting at all; but they that do profit, cannot tell how they profit. They may ſee the ſeed ſown, they may find it ſown in their hearts, they may perceive its fruit in their worſhip and walk; but how the grace of God works with the word in making them profit, is too deep for the moſt diſcerning Chriſtians. It is ſome way more myſterious, how the Lord works out profit by afflictions. It is indeed often found, bleſſed be his name. Many can ſay with David, Pſal. cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went aſtray: but now have I kept thy word.* ver. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy ſtatutes.* But none can tell how the grace of God makes the bitter ſeed of affliction bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs. And where is that ſaint, who, when the Lord is writing bitter things againſt him, and multiplying his wounds, can ſay in faith, "Now, at "this time, and in this manner, the Lord is ſowing "that ſeed in me, that ſhall ſpring up in fruits of "righteouſneſs, to his praiſe, and my certain pro"fit; and the day will come, wherein I ſhall bleſs his "name from my heart, for all the ſorrows I now feel "and mourn under?"

I ſhall ſay no more of this head of affliction; but only would give you this warning. Afflictions are very common, and much complained of. Some profeſſors ſpend all the little religion they have upon their afflictions. Take heed to your hearts under afflictions. It is to be bewailed, that many Chriſtians, their

their afflictions come on them they know not whence, they lie on them they know not wherefore, and they go off they know not how; that, if I may allude to ſuch ſacred words, and apply the phraſe to ſuch a ſinful frame, afflictions come on many, and they feel the ſmart of them, but *know not whence they come, nor whither they go.* They come on them when they are ſent, and go off when they are called; but they neither knew what God meant by them, nor did by them. No Chriſtian can ever make a ſpiritual and hearty ſong of praiſe for afflictions, unleſs there be ſome ſenſe or hope of profit thereby. If the profit be ſeen, the wiſdom and love of God in afflicting, will be heartily acknowledged.

V. The fifth time of ſpecial need of the grace of God, is *a time of ſpecial duty and ſervice to God called for.* All the courſe of our life is to be conſtant ſervice. We ought to live to his praiſe. We are made as creatures, and as new creatures, for this end, Iſa. xliii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 9. But there are ſome ſeaſons in which ſpecial work is called for, and then there is great need of grace to help in that hour. It is a mighty word of the preacher, Eccl. viii. 6. *Becauſe to every purpoſe there is time, and judgment; therefore the miſery of man is great upon him.* And it is only *the wiſe man's heart that diſcerneth time and judgment,* ver. 5. I would name four of thoſe times.

1. The time that men are called to believe on Jeſus Chriſt, and to ſecure their eternal ſalvation by a full cloſing with him. This is a *now*, a *day*, an *accepted time*, a *day of ſalvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. All that hear the goſpel, are bound by the call of God in it, and warranted by the promiſe of it, to receive by faith Jeſus Chriſt, and eternal life, every time they hear the goſpel. But ſometimes this duty is ſpecially called for; which, if neglected, may be of fatal conſequence to men. Hence that exhortation, Iſa. lv. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* When Chriſt is knocking at the

the door of the heart, then it is ſpecial duty to open to him, Rev. iii. 20. This was the day Jeruſalem had, and neglected; and that that Chriſt mourned over them for, Luke xix. 41, 42. Unſpeakable is mens need of the prevailing help of grace, when their hearts and conſciences are warmed with the calls of grace in the goſpel. In ſuch ſeaſons, the everlaſting bargain is either fixed by the power of grace working faith in the heart; or people are left to themſelves, and are farther from heaven than ever.

2. Some ſpecial call to men to give their teſtimony to Chriſt and his goſpel by ſuffering. The Lord comes and craves mens teſtimony to his truth, and chargeth them thus: "If thou haſt any love to me and my "honour, I demand thy witneſs, venture thy all, take "up thy croſs." Many Chriſtians have neglected ſuch trying ſeaſons, which in vain and ſorrowfully they have wiſhed for again. There is much of God's grace needful to diſcern theſe ſeaſons, and wiſely to improve them.

3. There is another remarkable ſeaſon of mens need of God's grace to help them in; and that is, the ſeaſon of the Lord's calling them to a duty-trial; a duty called to by way of trial. The Lord gives the call to try men; and very great are the conſequences of obeying or diſobeying of ſuch a call. Many inſtances are of this in the word. One is in Numb. xvi. The paſſage is plain and awful. When Iſrael had been above a year in the wilderneſs, twelve ſpies are ſent to view the land: they all bring back an evil report, ſave Joſhua and Caleb: the people murmur; God threatens them with judgments: they ſeem to be ſenſible of their ſin; it is like by the plague that ſlew the ten falſe ſpies, ver. 37. and by what Moſes ſpake to them. They acknowledge their ſin; and reſolve to go up next morning, ver. 40. Moſes tells them, they *now ſinned again, and that the Lord was not among them*, ver 41, 42. What ſevere dealing is this? The Lord was among them yeſterday, not this morning

morning: they were bid go up yeſterday, they are forbid next morning. Becauſe they did not what the Lord bid them do in his time, he will not protect them when they do the ſame thing in their time. Thus Saul was tried twice, 1 Sam. xiii. Samuel bid him tarry for him ſeven days at Gilgal: Saul tarried ſix days, and part of the ſeventh, and then offered ſacrifice; not, as I think, that he did invade the prieſt's office himſelf, but commanded ſome prieſt to do it. Profane princes never want profane chaplains. What a ſevere ſentence doth Samuel pronounce againſt him, ver. 13, 14.? Again, the ſame man is tried with another duty, 1 Sam. xv. and fails therein, and is puniſhed therefore. This ſort of trying men by duty, is like that in 2 Kings xiii. 14,—20. which Eliſha did put Joaſh unto. How many of the people of God, thro' the want of the preſent help of grace in ſome duty-trials, have ſtepped into ſuch paths, and have fallen into ſuch pits and ſnares, as they have never got well and clearly out of, as long as they lived?

4. It is a ſeaſon of great need of grace to help us in, when the Lord, by his providence puts ſeveral things in a perſon's choice, and leaves them to chuſe. The fulleſt of this kind was that offer made to David about judgments, 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, 13. A hard choice; but David did chuſe wiſely. His ſon Solomon had another offer; but it was of bleſſings, and not of judgments, 2 Chron. i. 7. *Aſk what I ſhall give thee.* And he choſe wiſely: and by his choice proved, that he had already received a good meaſure of wiſdom. Moſes had a great offer, and things of vaſt difference were in his choice; and he choſe like a man taught of God, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. Moſes, in his laſt ſermon to Iſrael, Deut. xxx. 15,—19, 20. puts them on chuſing: *I call heaven and earth to record this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing: therefore chuſe life, that both thou and thy ſeed may live: that thou mayeſt love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayeſt obey his voice, and that*

thou

thou mayeſt cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days. So did his ſucceſſor Joſhua, when he had ſettled Iſrael in the promiſed land, a little before his death: Joſhua xxiv. 15. *Chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.* Elijah did ſo with apoſtate Iſrael, 1 Kings xviii. 21. Somewhat like this is laid before men in the daily miniſtry of the word. The curſe of the law, or the bleſſing of the goſpel, is in mens offer; and men get as they chuſe. If men refuſe the bleſſing, the curſe belongs to them; if they receive the bleſſing, they are delivered from the curſe. But the *chuſing* I mean, is that the Lord puts men often to, in the ſeveral turns of his providence towards them: Pſalm. xxv. 12. *What man is he that feareth the Lord? him ſhall he teach in the way that he ſhall chuſe.* Many gracious promiſes are in the word, of God's guiding of his people; many prayers put up by ſaints in the word for this gracious guiding; and many praiſes rendered to the Lord for their bleſſed experiences of his guiding. Who can walk ſafely through this wilderneſs, without *the pillar of cloud by day*, and *the pillar of fire by night?* How many of mens ſorrows may be laid on their being left of God, in chuſing for themſelves? and how many of our mercies are owing to the Lord's gracious guiding of us in doubtful caſes? But it is a very hard thing to aſk direction from God. Three faults are common in this practice. 1. Preengagement of heart. As it is a great ſin after vows to make inquiry, Prov xx. 25.; ſo is it to aſk direction from God, when men are reſolved on the way they will take. An eminent inſtance of this ſinful frame, we have in Jer. xlii. and xliii. They ſought counſel of God by the prophet in a great ſtrait; they promiſed to follow it whatever it was: God gives his mind; they reject it, becauſe it ſuited not their inclinations. It is no eaſy thing to aſk direction of God, with an undetermined frame. 2. Pride of underſtanding. Men think they are wiſe enough to chuſe their own way. Therefore that command ſhould be

much minded, Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7. *Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own underſtanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths. Be not wiſe in thine own eyes.* And that other word, Prov. xx. 24. *Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then underſtand his own way?* Prov. xvi. 9. *A man's heart deviſeth his way, but the Lord directeth his ſteps.* 3. Haſte. Men *wait not for God's counſel*, Pſalm cvi. 13, 5, and therefore go without it, and ſtumble in dark paths. *He that believeth, maketh not haſte*, Iſa. xxviii. 16. A little more *patient waiting on the Lord*, as Pſalm xl. 1. hath often brought in determining light in doubtful caſes.

So much for the fifth ſeaſon of need of grace.

VI. The laſt time of need of grace is, *the time of dying*. It is indeed the laſt, for he that is helped by grace in that time, will need no more help of grace to eternity. This time of dying, is what we ſhould all think on; and if you think aright on it, it will not be unwelcome to hear of it.

On this I would ſhew, 1. The need of grace. And 2. The help of grace in this laſt and greateſt time of need.

1. I would ſpeak of *the need of grace to help in this ſeaſon*. Though all men have ſome conviction of it; yet, to ſtrengthen that conviction, I would ſpeak to a few things about it.

1ſt, This time of need is unavoidable. It is a time that muſt come. Other times of need may come, and may not come. We may be tempted, we may be afflicted, we may be tried, we may be caſt down, and we may be lifted up again: but die we muſt. *It is appointed unto men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. As ſure as we live, we muſt die. We live our appointed time, and we die at our appointed time, Job xiv. 5, 14. and all our *times are in his hand*, Pſalm xxxi. 15. Eccl. iii. 2. *There is a time to be born, and a time to die*, ver. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.* That man muſt have better eyes than thoſe of fleſh, that

that can ſee any beauty in death. If there had been but two or three of mankind, that had lived from Noah to this day, and had been privileged with an exemption from this general appointment, every fool on earth would have dreamed, that, it may be, he ſhall partake of the ſame privilege alſo. But when all that ever breathed from Adam to this day, are dead, (ſave the preſent generation, whom a few more years will ſweep away, as it hath done their predeceſſors); what folly is there in mens thoughtleſſneſs of this unavoidable fate? But if you ſay, *All ſhall not die, but be changed*, as 1 Cor. xv. 51. 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.; conſider, that this change is to them, as death is to us; and it may be will be as terrible to the ſaints alive then, as death now is. As believers now dread not death, and to be dead, ſo much as they fear to die; the ſtate of the dead in Chriſt is not terrible, but the paſſage to it is: ſo they that are changed at Chriſt's coming, may have the ſame ſentiments, till the change be wrought on them. It is (though none knows the particular manner of it) a putting off of mortality and corruption, and a putting on the robes of immortality and incorruption. The ſame is done as to every ſaint at death and the reſurrection. Both are done to every believer in an inſtant, who are found alive at Chriſt's ſecond coming. Elijah's tranſlation, 2 Kings ii. and Enoch's, Heb. xi. 5. were emblems of the change on believer's at Chriſt's ſecond appearance; as the raiſing of Lazarus, and others, both in the old teſtament and new, were of the general reſurrection: and in ſpecial manner they ſpoke of, Matth. xxvii. 52, 53. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of ſaints which ſlept, aroſe, and came out of the graves after his reſurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* But whatever the change on ſaints at Chriſt's coming be to them, and if it may be thought a more eaſy trial than natural death; it is certain, that the change that ſhall then paſs on the ungodly, will be far more dreadful than bare dying is now. This

is then the only exception from the general appointment on *all men once to die*. How amazing then is the ſtupidity of men, that ſo few ſeriouſly think on it, and prepare for it? that ſo many men and women, that are under the ſentence of death, that have the ſeeds of death in them; that live in a world wherein all things that have life, are dying before their eyes: that live on creatures that loſe their lives to ſupport theirs; that have ſo many warnings of death's ſure and ſpeedy approach, are yet, after all, ſurpriſed by it when it comes, as if they had never heard of it? This ſtupidity is both a ſad ſign and effect of the plague of unbelief. Judgment and eternity, that follow at death's heels are matters of pure faith. But death is obvious to ſenſe, reaſon, and univerſal experience. Yet men only think they may die, and do not entertain the perſuaſion with aſſurance into their hearts, and ſerious daily thoughts, that they muſt die.

2*dly*, Dying is not only unavoidable, but it is a new trial. None can tell what dying is. Many know what it is to be ſick, to be in great pain, to faint and run into a ſwoon, which is a little image of death; as alſo the heathen poet called ſleep *death's elder brother*; but none knows what dying is. It was a very ſenſible word a dying Chriſtian in this city ſpoke to myſelf, when viſiting him a few hours before his death, "No "man can tell another what dying is. I feel I am "dying; but I cannot tell you what it is." Death is a path that you never trod before; you never walked in it hitherto; you may have thought yourſelves to have gone a good way in *the valley of the ſhadow of death*, but you never walked through it. Paul *died daily*, 1 Cor. xv. 31.; he was *in deaths often*, 2 Cor. xi. 23.: yet he was a living man then, when he ſaid ſo; and he died but once. All new trials require new ſupplies of grace; and the trial of death is quite new. When we are tempted one day, we may know what temptation is thereby, and be thereby fitted for

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the next: but no paſt experience can teach us fully what dying is.

3*dly*, Dying is not only a neceſſary, and new trial; but it is ſuch a trial, in which a man's all is concerned for eternity. Immediately on death follows *judgment*, Heb. ix. 27. Death is the dark trance betwixt time and eternity. While we live, we are in time; when we are a-dying, we are leaving time, and paſſing into eternity; when we are dead, we are quite and for ever out of time, and are in eternity for ever. If a man miſcarry in this paſſage, if a man ſtumble in the dark valley of death, if he fall here, he falls for ever. I would not have people to imagine, that the ſtreſs of their ſalvation depends on their frame when a-dying; for ſome Chriſtians, when near to death, have neither the uſe and exerciſe of ſenſe or reaſon, much leſs of grace. But ſurely, when the caſe of mens bodies permits acts of a man, or of a Chriſtian, there is great need of grace to enable us to die well.

4*thly*, Dying is a great trial of faith. Though we know not fully what dying is; yet we may know ſo much of it, as to be convinced, that it is much harder to *die in faith* than to *live by faith*: and yet *living by faith* is the hardeſt thing we have to do in this world. To truſt in an unſeen God; to believe his unchangeable love, when we feel his anger, to truſt his bare word, when we ſee no appearance of performance, but many to the contrary, are no eaſy things to the beſt. Our frequent experience of the difficulty, and of our many failings in this daily exerciſe, of *living by faith*, may juſtly make us ſenſible of our need of great help of grace, when we ſhall be called to the new and more hard work of *dying by faith*. To inforce this a little, conſider,

(1.) Uſually when death draws near to men, and they draw near to it, the eye of the mind is clearer, and the conſcience more tender and ſharp-ſighted, in the review of their life and actions. Many never ſaw their lives well, till they are juſt at the end of them.

And

And many believers walk ſo, as a ſpiritual review of their ways breeds no ſmall ſtorm in their conſciences, and trial and ſhaking to their faith. Though death be a dark valley, yet great light of convictions and challenges ſprings up in it. Woe to them that never know, till they are a-dying, what an awakened conſcience is. Ways that are pleaſing to men, when the evil day is put far away, look frightfully on them when that day approacheth, and is very nigh.

(2.) A dying time, is a time wherein the devil is very buſy. He fetcheth then his laſt ſtroke on ſaints, and on ſinners. He doth his utmoſt to ſecure the damnation of ſinners, that he may not loſe them at laſt. The devil's death-hold of a dying ſinner is a ſtrong one. He alſo doth his utmoſt againſt believers, if not to mar their ſalvation, yet to hinder their conſolation. The devil's parting-blow hath been dreadful to many a ſaint. It is a weighty word, Heb. ii. 14. where he is ſaid to *have the power of death*. It is true, there it is ſaid alſo, that *Chriſt overcame him*, and *through death*. Death is properly and ſtrictly in the devil's dominions. Sin and death are properly the devil's, though the Lord hath the wiſe ordering of both. He permits ſin, and inflicts death; and death lies near the devil's great priſon, hell. Through the valley of death there are two paſſages; one leading to hell, and another to heaven. Moſt fall into the pit; others are brought through ſafe and ſound, by the ſkill and mercy of their bleſſed guide, Chriſt. It fares here with believers as with Iſrael, and with unbelievers as with the Egygtians, Heb. xi. 29. *By faith they paſſed through the red ſea, as by dry land; which the Egyptians aſſaying to do, were drowned.*

(3.) Judgment and eternity, when near, and ſeen at hand, are awful things: and a near view of them will try faith greatly. This view blows away the preſumption and hope of the hypocrite; Job xxvii. 8. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his ſoul?* Job xi. 20. *Their hope*

hope is as the giving up the ghoſt. His hope lived as long as he lived; and when he dies, it dies alſo. Woe to them that have a dying hope, a hope that cannot outlive death. Chriſtians are *begotten to a living* or *lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. He *hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. The man's body dies, but the Chriſtian's hope and faith lives. He *lies down in the grave in hope*, Pſal. xvi. 9. He *dies in that faith* he lived by Heb. xi. 13.

2. *What is the helpfulneſs of grace, in this time of great need, a time of dying.* I am ſpeaking to living men, but to ſuch as muſt die, and know not how ſoon. I ſhall only inſiſt on one thing at this time. The grace of God helps believers, by ſtrengthening of their faith. That is the help they mainly need in that hour. And this help ſtands in theſe,

1*ſt*, When a dying believer is helped by grace to ſee death in Chriſt's hand. There is a vaſt difference betwixt death in the devil's hand, who hath the power of it, and death in Chriſt's hand, who is maſter both of death and the devil: betwixt a man's ſeeing death approaching, and the devil behind it, and with it; and a man's ſeeing death coming on him, and Chriſt with it. Paul's triumph roſe on this ground: 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, (or hell,) where is thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin; and the ſtrength of ſin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* That by which death ſtings men, is ſin unpardoned, and God's holy law binding ſin and wrath on their perſons. Victory over both ſin and the law, comes by Jeſus Chriſt. When this victor, and victory in Chriſt, is ſeen by a believer, death is defied and deſpiſed, as a ſtingleſs overcome thing. Much and ſtrong faith is needful to enable a man to *play on the hole of this aſp.* Chriſt reveals himſelf to John almoſt dead with fear, Rev. i. 17, 18. *Fear not; I have the keys of hell and of death.* "Behold them in my hand, and behold me as the

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"lord of them." Should a believer in Jeſus fear any thing that Chriſt hath the power of? The bitterneſs of death is paſt to all believers, by Chriſt's death, and victory over it. And if their faith was ſtrong, their fears would be ſmall.

2*dly*, To have faith enabled to look through death, and beyond death. If a man's eyes be fixed on death only, and ſee no further, it is death to look on death: but when the believer's eye of faith is ſo quickened, that he can look through the trance of death, and ſee within the vail, where Chriſt is, that is a bleſſed help of grace. Chriſtians faith and *hope enters within the vail*, Heb. vi. 19. And a view within the vail is ſpecially deſirable and uſeful, when the Chriſtian is *walking in the valley of the ſhadow of death*, Pſal. xxiii. 4.

3*dly*, Faith is helped, when the dying believer is enabled to caſt his anchor on God in Chriſt confidently in this laſt ſtorm. This laſt act of faith is a great one. The more ſenſible a man is that he is on the point of eternal ruin, the nearer he is to drop into hell without divine help; the more ſenſibly he acts faith. Then the clingings and graſpings of faith on Chriſt, are ſenſible and ſtrong. When a believer looks on himſelf, and on his way, and ſeeth nothing in them pleaſing or ſtaying to his ſoul; he looks into the dark paſſage before him, and it is frightful to heart and fleſh; he looks on judgment and eternity as juſt at hand, and his thoughts are ſwallowed up with their greatneſs. In this caſe to ſtay his ſoul, and ſay with dying David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Although my houſe be not ſo with God*, (Though my heart, my ways, be not ſo with God as they ought to have been); *yet he hath made with me an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things and ſure: and this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire*, requires ſingular help of the grace of God. To ſhut their eyes, and give the hand to Chriſt, and to quiet the mind, by truſting our guide in this laſt ſtep, is a mighty bleſſing.

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I would conclude this diſcourſe with theſe four.

1. It is a great myſtery of faith, and a great trial of faith, that the way to eternal life ſhould lie through the midſt of this dark valley of death. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt brought eternal life for us, by the price of his blood; he went through death to take poſſeſſion of his kingdom and glory: and yet his people muſt go through death and take poſſeſſion of the gift of eternal life. If there were any allowed room or place for prayer in this affair, how many, and how earneſt prayers would we make to be delivered from going in this way to glory? But after a life of trials, temptations, and manifold tribulations, this laſt is ſtill before us; and we muſt paſs through, and ſet our feet in the cold waters of this Jordan, ere we enter the heavenly Canaan. After all the lively hopes of heaven, and ſweet foretaſtes of it, we have had; after our faith hath riſen us to a full aſſurance; yet through death muſt all the heirs of glory paſs.

2. There is no wiſdom like that of preparing for this awful hour; Job xiv. 14. *If a man die, ſhall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* "I will think on it, I will "look for it, I will prepare for it" Men are wiſe or fooliſh, according to their faithful diligence, or unbelieving negligence, in this preparing for death. Many have bewailed their neglect; never did any repent their diligence, in this work.

3. There is no right and ſure way of preparing for death, but by ſeeking ſaving acquaintance with Jeſus. If you ſet about the ſtudy of holineſs without Chriſt, you miſtake your way, and will never reach your end. But labour to be intimately acquainted with Jeſus Chriſt, and the communications of his grace will make you holy. Death deals with men, and billets them into their eternal quarters, in heaven or hell, as men are in Chriſt, or out of Chriſt. Their works, according to which they are judged, are but the fruits and effects of their different ſtates. Theſe two different

ſtates of men in this life, in Chriſt, or not in Chriſt, are the foundation of the two different ſtates in the next life, in heaven, or in hell; though all in Chriſt are holy, and all out of Chriſt are unholy.

6 4. There is no life truly comfortable, but that which hath a comfortable proſpect of death and judgment. Never envy the condition of them who ſeem to be the only chearful men in the world, whom one quarter of an hour's ſerious thought of death and judgment, is enough to make them like Belſhazzar at his great feaſt, Dan. v. 6. whoſe *countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, ſo that the joints of his loins were looſed, and his knees ſmote one againſt another.* Amazement ſeized on ſoul and body. How can a man be ſaid to live comfortably, that dare not think of death, for fear of marring his comfort? Miſerable is that conſolation, that cannot bear a ſerious thought of an approaching unavoidable thing. This is the wiſdom and mercy of the Lord to his people, that their true conſolation doth not only ſtand and abide in the view of death and judgment, but it ariſeth from that view that is ſo terrible to all natural men. This is the bleſſedneſs of believers, that this grace allows them a right to, and can give them a poſſeſſion of. And therefore we ſhould come to the throne of grace for it. Then you are happy Chriſtians, when ſerious thoughts of death breed ſerious joy.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

YOU have heard of the helpfulneſs of the grace of God in time of need, both in general and with particular inſtances of ſome ſpecial times of need. The laſt whereof is the time of dying. This I left at laſt day, and would ſpeak a little more to it; and then conclude all in a few words.

Death is a theme of great importance, and of very obvious influence. If people would let it enter into their ſerious thoughts, and would take a ſerious and ſteady view of it, they would quickly find more in it and about it, than ever they did, or could hear, by all that is told them. Next to the ſaving illumination of the Holy Ghoſt, with and by the word, there is no better ſchool for men to learn, weigh, and duly to underſtand the things of God in, than a frequent and near view of death. What an edge would this put upon our praying, hearing, worſhip, and walking? Every thing that is done by men as dying perſons, is uſually well done. I ſhall only add this, That there are ſome ſorts of dying that are very deſirable, in which the grace of God is very uſeful and needful.

1. Patient dying. Dying is not properly a duty, but a ſuffering. It is not our act; but there is a manifold exerciſe of grace called for in dying. Never did any man act in dying but Jeſus Chriſt: he could *lay down his life, and take it again*, John x. 17, 18. We cannot lay down our lives; they are not our own.

We are bid keep them as long as we lawfully can: and when the great command comes, *Return*, we are to yield obedience to it. It is a great bleſſing, to have patience for dying, and patience in dying; Heb. x. 36. *Ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promiſe.* And we often need patience moſt, when juſt upon the receiving of the promiſe. *We ſhould run with patience the race that is ſet before us*, Heb. xii. 1. And moſt of patience is uſually moſt needful in the laſt ſtage of this race. *Patience ſhould have her perfect work*, Jam. i. 4. And the perfect and perfecting work of patience, is the laſt act of it. We all know, that uſually death comes on by ſuch ſteps as are grievous to the fleſh. There are pains, ſickneſs, and languiſhings, that are no ſmall trials of patience: but theſe are in a manner but trials of the patience of the fleſh. There are other things about dying that patience is tried by; as time and place, and many circumſtances, that is no ſmall or eaſy thing to be quietly ſubmitted to. Jacob, the heir of the promiſe, goes down to Egypt, to Joſeph, for bread, after he is ſtarved out of the land of promiſe; and muſt die in Egypt, and leave his family there, where they were to be long and heavily oppreſſed, as the Lord told his grandfather Abraham, Gen. xv. 13. Moſes muſt die on the other ſide of Jordan. David muſt not ſee a ſtone laid in the temple. Joſiah muſt die in battle, and that *not hearkening to the words of Necho from the mouth of God*, 2 Chron. xxxv. 22. But what of ſuch ſad circumſtances of dying? Did not our Lord himſelf die under a dark cloud on his dear Father's face, and on his own bleſſed ſoul? *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* were ſad words from the ſaid ſoul of our dying bleſſed Lord. His diſciples forſook him, the ſun forſook him, earth and hell bandied againſt him; yet all was nothing to his Father's forſaking him. How bitter was this to our Lord! And yet how ſweet is it to the faith of believers! If you

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be called to die under a cloud, remember, The Lord, the heir, the purchaſer of heaven, went to heaven in the greateſt ſtorm that ever blew from earth, and hell, and heaven, on any man's face, at death. Men are aſhamed to expreſs any quarrel againſt dying; but there are many things about it that makes us needy of much grace to help to quiet ſubmitting unto it, both in ſubſtance, and all circumſtances attending it.

2. Safe dying. This is very needful, and it is grace's doing. Many die patiently, as men think, that die not ſafely. *There are no bands in the death of the wicked* ſometimes, Pſal. lxxiii. 4. Some go out of this life to hell more calmly, than ſome of the heirs of glory paſs to their bleſſed home. Safe dying is to die without any hurt to the ſoul; that when the cage of the body is broken by death, the ſoul, the bird, may take wing, and fly ſtraight and ſafe to heaven. *Death is the believers*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. as well as *life*. But what have we to do with death, or death with us? It is a black boat, that we muſt ſail out of time to heaven in: and Chriſt ſteers the boat, and lands all believers ſafely on heaven's ſhore. This is all we have to do with death. And when all the paſſengers are brought over, Chriſt will burn this ugly boat: Rev. xx. 14, 15. *And death and hell* (or *the grave*) *were caſt into the lake of fire: this is the ſecond death. And whoſoever was not found written in the book of life was caſt into the lake of fire.* And then in the new Jeruſalem, *there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are paſſed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. Who would not venture to paſs out of this bad world, to that bleſſed land, under Chriſt's conduct, though ſailing through the gulf of death be unpleaſant in itſelf to us? Men for gain will ſail from one end of the earth to the other; through heat and cold, and ſtormy ſeas and winds, and manifold perils, in the probable hope of advantage. But believers may be aſſured, that they ſhall arrive at their port.

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Never did a believer in Jeſus Chriſt die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will be all found ſafe and ſound with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Chriſt loſeth *none* of them; nay, *nothing* of them, John vi. 39. Not a bone of a believer is to be ſeen in the field of battle. They are all *more than conquerors, through him that loved them*, Rom. viii. 37.

3. It is very deſirable to have an honourable dying. It is a part of the vanity of this world, that many dote upon an honourable burial. Some reſpect indeed ſhould be paid to the dead bodies of believers; but honourable dying is a great deal more conſiderable, than that men call an honourable burial. Our Lord told Peter of his dying, John xxi. 19. *This ſpake Jeſus, ſignifying by what death Peter ſhould glorify God.* That is honourable dying that brings glory to God. Paul is confident of this as to himſelf: Phil. i. 20: *According to my earneſt expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I ſhall be aſhamed, but that with all boldneſs, as always, ſo now alſo, Chriſt ſhall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.* The moſt honourable dying, is dying for the Lord. This honour is not given to all his ſaints. All ſaints *die in the Lord, and bleſſed are they*, Rev. xiv. 13. Our deſire ſhould be, to be enabled by his grace to bear our dying teſtimony to Chriſt and his goſpel. There have been ſtrong convictions given to the conſciences of ſinners, wonderful ſupports to the hearts of ſurviving ſaints, by the honourable dying of ſome believers. Their example, their words, their very looks and behaviour, in the ſhadow of death, have been of great uſe to them that have ſeen and heard them.

4. It is alſo deſirable to have the mercy of comfortable dying; to have *an entrance miniſtered to us abundantly, into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Pet. i. 11. The Lord's dealings with his people in this matter, are a great depth. Some that have given moſt ſhining evidences of the truth and ſtrength of the grace of God in them, who have ſpent their

their days eminently to the Lord's praiſe, and to the edifying of his body the church, have gone to heaven under a cloud: others, that were hardly known or regarded in Chriſt's flock, have gone off the ſtage triumphantly. No obſerver can eſcape the notice of ſuch inſtances. Therefore we muſt not ſay, that conſolation in dying is a certain ſign of eminency in grace, or of tenderneſs in walking. It is not very unuſual, to ſee the greateſt ſtorm overtake even a ſtrong believer, juſt as he is putting into the harbour. However, this diſpenſation of the Lord's grace in granting a comfortable exit, is what we ſhould beg earneſtly, and pray for heartily. I believe there are few Chriſtians ſo caſt down with fears, and clouds, and darkneſs, but if they could be aſſured, that all ſhall be diſpelled at death, (and it is ſometimes ſo); and that they ſhould have a clear evening, and ſtrong conſolation, in their laſt hours, they would bear their preſent ſorrows better. Though comfortable dying be not ſimply neceſſary to the ſalvation of a believer; yet it is a bleſſing more valuable than many others that are more in our prayers. Grace can help to it; and a precious help it is, and we ſhould mind it much in our addreſſes to the throne of grace.

So much of theſe times of need, and of the help of grace in them.

There are a few exhortations from this whole doctrine of the helpfulneſs of grace in a time of need, that I would conclude this text with.

The general exhortation is this, Learn not only to ſubmit as to what is determined, and that you cannot alter; but to be heartily content with this wiſe diſpenſation of God about your need and his grace, as a contrivance becoming his wiſdom, and levelled at your good: As,

1. That our neceſſities are ſo many, ſo great, and ſo unavoidable; and yet there is a ſufficient ſupply provided for them. The new creature is the moſt needy

needy creature of all God's creation. The Lord hath framed the new creature in a ſingular way, and for a ſingular uſe and end. All other creatures have their being from God, and have that being continued by God in the common courſe of his wiſe and powerful providence. But the new creature is not only of and from God, but it is wrought, and hath its being in Chriſt Jeſus, and its life is continued by a continual gracious efflux from him; for *without him* the new creature *can do nothing*, John xv. 5. Let not ſuch a thought ariſe in your heart, (or if it ariſe, give it no entertainment), Why hath God made this new creature ſo needy a creature as it is? Surely he might have done otherwiſe. He made the firſt Adam in another ſtate. He was made perfect in ſoul and body immediately. His ſtate was perfect; he needed little, and all at hand. But the new creature is framed weak and neceſſitous. The difference is as great betwixt the firſt Adam, and a Chriſtian at his regeneration, as betwixt perfect Adam, and a young babe newly born, or a child conceived in the womb. Yet the Lord hath made proviſion of grace ſufficient for all theſe neceſſities. And he loves the glory of his grace ſo, and takes ſo great delight in giving of his grace, that he not only lets the heirs of this grace fall into the common pit of ſin and miſery with others, and ſometimes deeper than many of them that are left, that his grace may be glorified, in *loving them out of the pit of corruption*, as Hezekiah's word is, Iſa. xxxviii. 17.; (for all that are converted, are plucked out of their natural damnable ſtate, by a mighty act of the love of God, Eph. ii. 4.); but when he hath pulled them out, he ſets them down in his kingdom of grace, in ſo indigent and weak a condition, that they may glorify him by begging and believing, and he may glorify himſelf in giving of his grace to them. Who ſhould find fault with this wiſe way?

2. Be ſatisfied, that this grace which is your ſupply, is all in Chriſt Jeſus, and not in your own hand.

Since

Since Adam fell, and ruined himſelf and all his poſterity, by having his and their ſtock in his own hand, and ſinning it away; the Lord in mercy hath reſolved never to intruſt a mere man again with his own ſtock; but hath lodged all the grace his people are ſaved and ſupplied by, in Chriſt's hand. And there it is ſafe. Adam was created perfect, and had a ſufficient ſtock to have enriched himſelf and all his offspring; but he was left to his free will, and ſo came on it. This is an eternal diſgrace to a man's free will. What muſt the free will of a ſinner be able to do, when the free will of perfect ſinleſs man opened the door to ſin, and death, and ruin, upon the whole world of mankind? It is therefore graciouſly and wiſely provided, that free will ſhall have no hand in the ſalvation of ſinners, (and indeed free will to good, is but a vain name, uſurped by willing and wilful ſlaves to ſin); and that in its ſtead, the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be, and do all in all. But we are ſo proud, that we would fain have ſomewhat in our own hand; and are ſo uſed to ſenſe, and unſkillful in believing, that we can hardly reckon that our own, that is not in our poſſeſſion, and at our diſpoſing. But, in this order, the Lord conſults the intereſt of his glory, and the ſecurity of our ſalvation, and daily ſupplies, by lodging our all in Chriſt's hand; who is able to keep it ſafely for us, and ready and willing to give forth of it to us, according to our real neceſſity.

3. Be ſatisfied with this, that the ſpecial times of our need are not uſually known to us before they come. There is none of the people of God, nor of the children of men, that uſually know twenty-four hours before, what temptations and trials they may meet with. We know we may be tempted; but we know not when, nor how, and in what part, the adverſary may aſſault us, or with what weapons. We know we may be afflicted: but we know not with what rod, nor when. We know we muſt die; but we know not how, nor when. There is a fooliſh and

ſinful curioſity in our nature, that raiſeth deſires to know future things concerning ourſelves. It were well, if men were duly deſirous to know from the word, what their eternal ſtate ſhall be. But in other things that may befal us in time, it is dangerous curioſity to be inquiſitive. People imagine, that it would be of great advantage to them to foreknow future events, as to themſelves. But I am ſure it would be a great diſadvantage, and what you would quickly repent of. If the Lord ſhould reveal to any of you, and ſet in a clear light before the eyes of your mind, all the particular providences, trials, and afflictions, and temptations, you are to meet with in ſeven years time to come; what a dread would it be to you! You would ſoon beg that it might be forgot again. It is a great deal better for us, that future things that belong to God, are ſecret and kept from us; and that we are led on believing, and come to the waters in our way to heaven, one after another, and get thro' them, by the gracious conduct of our bleſſed guide, Chriſt. He will give no Chriſtian a particular and exact map of all his way, and ſtages, and entertainment, in this wilderneſs-journey to heaven, though our Lord hath fixed them all in his decree. Should it not be enough for us, that he will lead us well and ſafely; that no water ſhall drown us; that he will never leave us, but be with us where-ever he leads us, and will bring us ſafe home at laſt to his Father's houſe?

4. Be ſatisfied with this part of his wiſe order, that this ſupply of his grace to help in time of need, muſt be come for. Not only that we may come for it, which is a great privilege; but that we muſt come for it, if we would have it. Is there any ſo unreaſonable, as to find fault with this order? Is it not fair and eaſy, Aſk and have? Would any have grace to help them, unſought? If you would have it, you are aſking it. Is it not fit then to come for it, and tell

Chriſt

Chriſt you would have it? If you would not have it, you are praying againſt it. And wicked are thoſe prayers, that are in averſion from the grace of Chriſt? Every believer will find his heart reconciled to this order. They know, that there is a bleſſing in coming, as well as a bleſſing to be got by coming. And moſt Chriſtians, I am apt to think, continue their approaches to the throne of grace, as much, if not more, from the delight they find in coming, as from the profit they find by coming; though theſe two are not inconſiſtent. *He that delights not himſelf in the Lord, will not always call upon God*, Job xxvii. 10. So much for this general exhortation.

Exhort. 2. In the next place, I would ſpeak ſomewhat to them that are not acquainted with the grace of God, nor with the throne of grace. *Graceleſs people* is ſo bad a name, that few will own it, though many deſerve it. Such fill up much room in moſt aſſemblies, and ſometimes may ſtep up into the pulpit, in the name of miniſters of that grace of God they never knew but in a book. But God calls all by their right names, and only can make men anſwer to thoſe names. Let theſe four things enter into ſuch folks thoughts.

1. Unavoidably a time of need will come, that the grace of God can only help in. None but a great atheiſt can make any doubt of this. Doſt thou believe there is a God? that thou art a mortal man, whom a few days more will turn out of this world? Doſt thou believe that thou haſt an immortal ſoul, that muſt be for ever? (and how much a beaſt is that man, and worſe than a beaſt, that doubts of any of theſe?) If thou believe theſe plain principles, canſt thou doubt but a time of need will come, wherein nothing can ſtand thee in any ſtead, but only this God's mercy and grace?

2. This preſent time you have, is the only time given you for preparing for the time of need that muſt come. How little is that precious golden talent, time,

laid out for that the Lord gives it for? Can men think that God gives them time, to ſpend it in the ways they ſpend it? That muſt be ill-ſpent time, that is ſpent ſo, as men know they muſt either repent of, or periſh by. We are bid *redeem the time*, Eph. v. 16. But moſt men throw it away, or ſell it to ſin and Satan, as if they had no uſe for it. The beſt uſe of time, is to ſpend it in preparing for eternity: *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come*, Job xiv. 14. Theſe are well-ſpent days. But how few of the hours of your days are thus ſpent?

3. There can be no greater folly, than to neglect this preſent only ſeaſon of preparing for an unavoidable time of extremity. Our Lord, in the parable, calls the five negligent virgins, *fooliſh*, Matth. xxv. 2. If a man throw away his eſtate in folly and vanity, the world will brand him with the name of a fool, and juſtly. If a man throws away his health and life, there is folly in that too. But for a man to throw away his ſoul, and all his hopes of well-being for eternity, is the rankeſt of all folly: yet is the world ſo full of ſuch fools, that very few give it its true name. He muſt be greatly plagued with blindneſs and ſtupidity, that is not convinced, that that is the greateſt folly that ſhuts a man eternally out of heaven, and locks him up in hell.

4. There can be no reflection and remorſe more ſad and bitter than that that ariſeth on the review and ſenſe of this folly, when it is remedileſs. We read of *the worm that dieth not*, Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. This is commonly underſtood of conſcience. Conſcience ſtings two ways; and one way more dreadfully than the other. Conſcience ſtings for ſin, as it is an offence againſt God, a breach of his holy law, and as it expoſeth the ſinner to God's dreadful anger. But conſcience ſtings more dreadfully, for neglecting the remedy for ſin provided in Chriſt, and revealed to men

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in the goſpel. Therefore our Lord lays the condemnation of the world that periſheth under the goſpel, on this, John iii. 9. It is not laid on the *evil of their deeds:* but on this, that their love to their deeds made them hate the light that diſcovered them, and the grace that only can pardon and heal them. Men periſh not under the goſpel, becauſe they are ſinners againſt God's law, (though the leaſt ſin deſerves hell: and they that have not the light of the goſpel, are juſtly judged by the law); but becauſe they *believe not in Jeſus Chriſt*, John iii. 18. And believers in Chriſt are not ſaved becauſe they are holy, (though all that believe are holy); but becauſe they are in Chriſt by faith; that the glory of ſalvation may be Chriſt's entirely, and the blame of mens perdition under the goſpel may be their own entirely.

Let men therefore prevent this dreadful ruin, by giving an ear to him that calleth them. Chriſt offers you ſalvation from a throne of grace: come and take it. Come and put forth your hand, and take and eat of the tree of life, and live for ever. You muſt all ſhortly ſtand before Chriſt's throne, when it will be no more a throne of grace: 2 Cor. v. 10. *We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.* That will be a time of great need; and none can ſtand with peace before that throne, but they that have been acquainted with this throne of grace in my text. Chriſt on the throne of grace, and Chriſt on the judgment-ſeat is the ſame Chriſt. Chriſt in the goſpel, and Chriſt in the clouds, is the ſame Chriſt. Yet we muſt diſtinguiſh. Chriſt on the throne of grace is no judge; and Chriſt on the judgment-ſeat hath no grace to diſpenſe. Now is his time of diſpenſing grace; then will be the day of his puniſhing the deſpiſers of grace, and of giving the crown of glory to the receivers of his grace.

In the laſt place, I would give a few directions unto real Chriſtians, in order to your providing of grace to help in time of need.

1. Lay

1. Lay the foundation ſure. A time of need will try it, 1 Cor. iii. 11. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt.* The Father hath laid Chriſt for a foundation: Iſa. xxviii. 16. *Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner ſtone, a ſure foundation: he that believeth, ſhall not make haſte.* Applied to Chriſt, 1 Peter ii. 6. The faithful miniſters of the goſpel lay Chriſt for a foundation: 1 Cor. iii. 10. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wiſe maſter builder I have laid the foundation.* But how can a poor ſinner lay Chriſt for a foundation to himſelf? Turn but the words, and the queſtion is anſwered: *Thy laying of Chriſt for a foundation*, is *thy laying thyſelf upon Chriſt for a foundation;* and it is neither more nor leſs, nor any thing elſe. Caſt yourſelves, and all your concerns about ſalvation, on Chriſt alone. Let him bear all. He only can, and calls for this from you. One of the firſt queſtions that ariſeth in the mind of a Chriſtian in a time of need, is this: Is the foundation right laid? am I founded on Chriſt? The ſtorm will try the foundation. It were great wiſdom to ſecure that before the ſtorm come.

2. Clear up your evidences againſt a time of need. The evidences of a Chriſtian are not his charters for heaven, (the covenant of grace contains them); but they are as light, by which a Chriſtian reads his charters. Evidences are of great uſe in a time of need. They ſtand in God's work in us. Our faith ſtands on God's word of promiſe to us, and on Chriſt's work for us; the evidences of believers ſtand in God's gracious working in, and on, and by them. Theſe four words I would give about your evidences. 1. When you cannot perceive them, ſearch for them: 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownſelves; know ye not your ownſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates,*

probates, or *diſapproved?* The exhortation is ſo delivered, as to perſuade us, that very narrow and exact ſearching is called for in this work. May not that Chriſtian's heart condemn him, who is daily complaining of his ignorance of his ſtate, when he knows that ſerious ſelf-examination is neglected by him? 2. If upon ſearching you cannot yet find, beg the help of the Spirit of God to diſcover his own work in you: 1 Cor. ii. 12. *Now we have received, not the ſpirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.* The illumination of the Holy Ghoſt is not only ſimply needful, to give us a ſaving knowledge of the myſtery of the goſpel; but is ſo alſo to give us a right knowledge of the myſtery of his grace in us, Eph. i. 17, 18, 19. where the apoſtle prays for the Spirit, for both theſe ends. David prays for the Lord's help in his examining of himſelf, Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. A heart laid open to God's ſearch, a heart willing to have all in it viewed and diſcovered by the Lord, is an upright ſincere heart. Whoever is willing to know his worſt, is not ſtark naught: yet he that ſeeth but the leaſt half of his badneſs, will judge himſelf to be very bad. 3. If you cannot yet find your evidences, make them preſently. Many Chriſtians need this advice. They formerly had evidences of their intereſt in Chriſt; had a clear ſight of the truth and fruits of their faith, and love, and repentance: this refreſhing ſight is gone, and they *mourn as without the ſun*, as Job ſpeaks, chap. xxx. 28. Let ſuch take this courſe. Act afreſh that grace, when you are doubtful whether you ever acted it before. See you at preſent no clear evidences of your former believing? Act faith preſently. There are few things more evident, than ſtrong believing is in the very acting of it. And if the acting of faith on Jeſus Chriſt, as *ſpeaking in righteouſneſs, and mighty to ſave*, Iſa. lxiii. 1. be evident to thee, thou haſt the beſt evidence for eternal life that is in all the Bible. Moſt of the promiſes run

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this way. *Whoever believeth on the Son of God, hath everlaſting life*, John iii. 15, 16, 17. It is the gracious and wiſe conſtitution of the Lord, that no grace can be ordinarily evident to a man in whom it is, ſo, as in and by the exerciſe and acting of it. 4. When you find evidences of God's work in you, bleſs the worker and diſcoverer of them, and believe more and more. Say with David, Pſal. lxxi. 14. *I will hope continually, and will yet praiſe thee more and more.* It is juſt with God, and merciful too, that darkneſs ſhould come upon that man's evidences, who ſits down upon them, and bleſſeth himſelf in them, more than he doth God for them; and pleaſing himſelf in a life of ſenſe, with neglecting the life of faith.

3. Make good uſe of your former experiences of the mercy and grace of God, helping you in former times of need. The Lord's kindneſs is not ſhown to us for the preſent time only, but for the time to come. It is not given to us, to play or pleaſe ourſelves with at preſent, but for good and needful uſes; for ſtrengthening of our faith, exciting of praiſe, and directing and encouraging us to come to the ſame door we were formerly relieved at. It is a part of the work of faith, to look back on formerly-beſtowed mercy and grace, as well as to look forward to the greater and better things to come. It is a great ſin, but very common, that a believer who hath many years experience of the mercy of God, if there be a ſtop put to the ſtream of mercy, he is often as much ſhaken in his faith, as if he had never taſted that the Lord is gracious.

4. In preparing for a time of need, be careful to keep your conſciences clean. There is no worſe company in an evil day, than an evil conſcience. It is worſe company than the devil's. His company is that of a tempter and accuſer; but an evil conſcience is a judge condemning, and an executioner tormenting a man. Therefore *herein exerciſe yourſelves, to have a conſcience void of offence toward God, and toward*

ward men, Acts xxiv. 16. It is uſually ſeen, that times of great trials do dart in ſome light into mens conſciences, and do make men look into their hearts and ways more narrowly, and ſpy ſmall faults that they could not ſee at other times; for they are days of darkneſs in one ſenſe, and days of light in another. Study therefore to keep thy conſcience clean and pure, by holy and tender walking, and by daily believing; for it is *the blood of Chriſt* that only can *purge the conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. And let me aſſure you of this, (and if you will not believe it, I dare ſay you will feel it, and feel it the more then, if you believe it not now), that ſuch as make all their care about their conſciences to ſtand in watchfulneſs about their hearts and ways, and are utterly eſtranged from believing applications to the blood of Jeſus, when an evil day and an evil conſcience meet together, (and meet they will), that they will be in a ſad and dreadful confuſion. And no better will their condition be, who upon a falſe pretence (and in this caſe it is always falſe) of truſting in Chriſt, have no care either of their conſcience or converſation. *The myſtery of the faith is to be held* (and kept) *in a pure conſcience*, 1 Tim. i. 9. We ſhould *hold faith and a good conſcience*, 1 Tim. iii. 19. They cannot be got, nor kept, but together. Whoever ſuffers ſhipwreck of the one, loſeth the other. Chriſt is *the Saviour of ſinners;* but he is no *miniſter of ſin*, Gal. ii. 17. *He came into the world to ſave ſinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15.: not to ſave ſaints; for there are none in it, but of his making: and his making ſinners to be ſaints, is a notable part of his ſaving, 2 Tim. i. 9. The *inheritance* is for them that *obtain forgiveneſs of ſins*, and who *are ſanctified by faith in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. None are ſaved but the ſanctified; and none are ſanctified but by faith in Chriſt Jeſus. There may be in an unbeliever a picture and ſhadow of holineſs: but it is an abomination in the ſight of God; whatever the man that hath it, or they that ſee it,

may think of it. A holy unbeliever, or an unholy believer, never was ſince the world began, nor will be while it laſts.

5. Multiply your addreſſes to the throne of grace, before the time of need come. Happy were that Chriſtian that could cry as earneſtly for that grace that can help him, before the time of need come, as he will ſee it needful to have it, when that time doth come. But it is the weakneſs of our minds as men, and of our grace as Chriſtians, that we cannot take up ſo clear a proſpect of things to come; and that they are not ſo big in our eyes at a diſtance, as when preſent. Yet by faith we foreſee times of need; and ſhould pray much for grace to help us when that time comes. Suppoſe you ſhould, for twenty years together, beg that grace and mercy that you ſhould not have occaſion for till thoſe years were expired; would there be any hurt in it?

6. In any ſpecial proſpect of an approaching time of need, make ſpecial addreſſes to the throne of grace, for grace to help in that time. There are two things in theſe addreſſes I recommend to you. 1. Let them be perſonal, particular, and ſecret; our Lord's direction, Matth. vi. 6. Many Chriſtians find it an eaſier thing to keep a day of prayer with others, than to ſpend an hour in prayer in ſecret by themſelves. It were far eaſier to know a man's frame and ſtate, by his ſecret dealings with God, (if we were acquainted with them), than by all his profeſſions and duties beſides. 2. Let theſe addreſſes be ſometimes ſolemn and long. There are ſome mercies not to be got (as *ſome ſort of devils are not to be caſt out*) *but by faſting and prayer*, Matth. xvii. 21. Secret, perſonal faſts, I am afraid are very rare amongſt Chriſtians in our days. Chriſt commands and directs us about them, Matth. vi. 16, 17, 18. as well as about ſecret prayer, Matth. vi. 6, 7. Miniſters ſhould not load Chriſtians with work above the ſtrength of their bodies, or minds, or grace. But ſurely it is but

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reaſonable ſervice required of you, that you ſhould make addreſſes to the throne of grace, in ſome ſuitableneſs to your need of that grace that is diſpenſed from it.

There are four things, which if they were the fruit of my ſpeaking and of your hearing ſo often from this text, we ſhould both have cauſe to bleſs the Lord, *who teacheth his people to profit*, Iſa. xlviii. 17.

1. If you learn to pray better, and to ply prayer more. David *gave himſelf to prayer*, Pſal. cix. 4. The apoſtles, thoſe extraordinary officers of the primitive church, *gave themſelves continually to prayer, and to the miniſtry of the word*, Acts vi. 4. There are times in which private Chriſtians *ſhould give themſelves to faſting and prayer*, 1 Cor. vii. 5. If you belong to God, he will make you pray: and teach you with briers and thorns, if you will not yield to more gentle methods. How ſad is the reflection that riſeth in the heart, under ſome heavy trial, "This is brought on "me for my indulged diſtance and eſtrangement from "God!"

2. If you learn to mind Chriſt more, and make more uſe of him in your praying. He is the King on this throne of grace. As much as Chriſt is out of your minds in praying, ſo much are you out in praying, and your praying out of that it ought to be. That which we beg, is out of Chriſt's ſtore. In whoſe name do we beg it, but in his? for whoſe ſake, but for his? Out of whoſe hand do we receive what we aſk and get, but out of his? It is marvellous, that people ſhould pretend to prayer, and think they pray, who yet forget Jeſus Chriſt, who is all in all in all right prayer.

3. If you learn to mind and plead more God's free grace in Jeſus Chriſt, in your praying. Free grace is the ſenſible humble man's plea. He is a proud ignorant perſon, that ſeeks or uſes any other plea at God's throne of grace. Free grace is the only thing that faith can firſt lay hold on. It is a plea that any

man may uſe; it is the conſtant and powerful plea of a wiſe believer. It anſwers every caſe, and ſuits every prayer; and the loweſt caſe, and the higheſt prayer, beſt.

4. If you learn never to leave off improving of Chriſt, and pleading for grace at this throne of grace, till ye have no more need of grace. And that will never be as long as you live. If any man fall into ſuch a dream, that he has got beyond the need of grace, and ſo of praying, he is one that never rightly knew himſelf, nor grace, nor Chriſt, nor praying. The believer knows he ſtands in need of Chriſt and grace; and therefore prays *as long as he liveth*, as David reſolved, Pſal. cxvi. 2. And when he comes to die, and hath prayed his laſt prayer, with Stephen, Acts vii. 59. *Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit*, and gets it anſwered; praying, believing, and the throne of grace itſelf, as to him, is at an end; and everlaſting praiſes before the throne of glory, of God, and of the Lamb, begin, never to have an end.

" *Even ſo come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.* Finiſh " thy work; fulfil all thy promiſes; anſwer fully all " the prayers of all thy people. Put an end to ſin, " and time, and trouble, and temptation: and haſten " the marriage day, that thy people *may be glad and* " *rejoice, and give honour to thee*, Rev. xix. 7. Let " the bride be made ready, and let the Bridegroom " appear in his wedding-garments of glory. O how " bleſſed will the meeting and the marriage be! He " married his bride when on earth, in garments dyed " in his own precious blood; and the bride receives " him as glorious, even in his bloody raiment. This " moſt precious blood was ſhed in love to his bride, " and for her ſalvation; and therefore he is amiable " to her in that dreſs. Believers in Chriſt are con- " tracted to a ſlain huſband; but ſhall be married to " him in a far other manifeſtation of himſelf. How " great is the difference betwixt our deareſt Lord Jeſus,

" Jeſus, under his croſs, and under his crown? And " yet, under his croſs, he is infinitely amiable to a " believer's heart and eye. If it were not that the " light of that glorious day of his appearance will " prevent all miſtakes, *the nations of them which are* " *ſaved* (as they are called, for their multitude out of " all nations, Rev. xxi. 24.) might doubt, (but doubt " they cannot; but wonder they will, both at him " and at themſelves, 2 Theſſ. i. 10.), and ſay, Is this " that bleſſed Saviour I believed on ſo feebly? whom " I truſted with my ſoul and its ſalvation, with ſo " much fainting, and with ſo many fears? Is this he " whom I loved ſo little, and ſo coldly? Is this he " whom (all the time I lived on earth, after he had " revealed himſelf to me), I depended and lived on " by faith, and that with ſo many ſtaggerings through " unbelief, becauſe I knew not ſo well, as now I do, " whom I then believed?

" And until this bleſſed day come, (and come it " will; for it is promiſed and ſworn by him who can- " not lye. It is not far off; for it is above ſixteen-hun- " dred years ſince he teſtified, *Surely I come quickly* " Rev. xxii. 20. It is his laſt promiſe to his bride), " let his moſt excellent *name be poured out as ointment;* " and let the ſavour of his knowledge be made mani- " feſt in every place. Let his ſaving bleſſed death " be remembered, gloried in, and fed upon, by all " believers: (the greateſt token of his love to us the " only price of our redemption, 1 Pet. i. 19. and the " only food of our ſouls). Let his juſtifying righte- " ouſneſs be only mentioned before God on earth by " believing ſinners, as it will be only mentioned by " glorified praiſing ſaints in heaven. Let the throne " of grace, reared up by the Father in his Son, and " conſecrated by the blood of his Son, *God manifeſt* " *in the fleſh*, be revealed to the darkened world, and " ſet up among the blinded nations: and let grace " from thence be diſpenſed to many thouſand of pe- " riſhing ſinners. Let the glory of God's free, moſt

free,

" free, every way free grace in Jeſus Chriſt, ſhine ſo
" in the nations, as it may (and when that glory
" ſhines, it will) darken, confound, and put to ſhame,
" all the Antichriſtian darkneſs, (and dreams of falſe
" chriſts of mens making, and of works, hire, and
" merit, under all their names and pretences), and
" make it all hateful in ſinners eyes, as it is hurtful to
" their ſouls, and as it is hateful in God's ſight. Let
" the praiſes of *my Lord and my God*, as recovered
" Thomas calls him, John xx. 28. fill heaven and
" earth; and fill the hearts, and fill the mouths, and
" ſhine in the lives of all believers on his name; and
" let his praiſe fill all the goſpel-worſhip in all the
" churches, till the day of *the glorious appearing of the*
" *great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, Tit. ii. 13.
" And unto theſe wiſhes let every believer on, and
" ſincere lover of Jeſus Chriſt, ſay (and every one
" that is ſuch, will ſay) *Amen. So let it be, ſo will it*
" *be.*"

A SER-

A

SERMON

Preached in October 1682.

First publiſhed in the *Continuation of Morning-exerciſe Queſtions.*

QUEST. By what means may Miniſters beſt win ſouls?

1 TIM. iv. 16.

Take heed unto thyſelf, and unto thy doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear thee.

THE words are a ſubſtantial part of the good counſel and direction the apoſtle giveth unto Timothy, and in him unto all the miniſters of the goſpel.

In them are two things.

1. A threefold duty laid on goſpel-miniſters, *Take heed unto thyſelf, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them.*

2. A double advantage conſequent upon the diſcharge of this duty: *For in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear thee.*

1. Miniſters duty is in three things here.

1*ſt*, *Take heed unto thyſelf.* Thou art ſet in a high office, in a dangerous place; take good and narrow heed, look well to thyſelf, thy heart and way.

2*dly*, *Take heed unto thy doctrine.* Though thou be ever ſo well gifted, and approved both of God and

and men; though thou be an extraordinary officer, (as Timothy was); yet take heed unto thy doctrine. Theſe two we paſs at preſent; becauſe we ſhall reſume them at greater length, when we take their help to the reſolving of this queſtion.

3*dly*, *Continue in them.* This hath relation, it appears, unto ver 12, and 15, as well as unto the preceeding part of this verſe. I ſhall diſmiſs this part of the verſe with theſe.

(1.) Continue in thy work. Thou who art a miniſter, it is a work for thy lifetime; and not to be taken up and laid down again, according as it may beſt ſuit a man's carnal inclinations, and outward conveniencies. The apoſtles that laboured with their hands, have, by that example, ſet the conſcience of a miniſter at liberty, to provide for the neceſſities of this life by other employments, when he cannot live of the goſpel; yet certainly no man that is called of God to this work, can with a ſafe conſcience abandon it wholly. Paul, for example rather than neceſſity, both preached, and wrought in a handy-craft. As preaching doth not make working unlawful, ſo neither ſhould any other buſineſs of a miniſter make preaching to ceaſe.

(2.) Continue in endeavours after greater fitneſs for thy work. No attainments in fitneſs and qualifications for this work, can free a man of the obligation that lies on him to increaſe and grow therein more and more. It is not enough that a man ſtudy and be painful ere he enter into the miniſtry, but he muſt labour ſtill to be more fit for his great work.

(3.) Continue in thy vigour, and painfulneſs, and diligence. Young miniſters, that are ſound and ſincere before God, are uſually warm and diligent in the firſt years of their miniſtry; and many do decline afterwards, and become more cold and remiſs. This exhortation is a check thereunto: *Continue in them.*

2. The

2. The ſecond thing in the word, is, the double advantage propoſed to encourage miniſters to this hard duty.

1*ſt*, *Thou ſhalt ſave thyſelf.* Thy own ſalvation ſhall be promoted and ſecured thereby.

How becoming is it for a miniſter to mind his own ſalvation! and to mind it ſo heartily, as to be animated from the hopes of it unto the greater diligence in his miniſtry!

But how doth faithfulneſs in the miniſtry of the goſpel further the miniſter's ſalvation?

(1.) Faithfulneſs in a man's generation-work, is of great uſe and advantage to ſalvation. *Well done good and faithful ſervant*, from the Lord's own mouth, is a great ſecurity; and diligence and faithfulneſs in improving the talents we are intruſted with, through grace, procure that teſtimony.

(2.) Thou ſhalt ſave thyſelf from the guilt of other mens ſins and ruin, if thou be faithful in the miniſtry: Ezek. xxxiii. 9. *Thou haſt delivered* (or *ſaved*) *thy ſoul*, ſaith the Lord to the prophet in the caſe of unſucceſsful faithfulneſs. So Paul, Acts xviii. 6. *I am clean, your blood be upon your own heads:* and Acts xx. 26, 27. *I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.* Every miniſter pledgeth his ſoul to God, that he ſhall be a faithful ſervant; and he that is ſuch, may freely take up his ſtake, whatever his ſucceſs on others be.

(3.) Faithfulneſs and painfulneſs in the miniſtry of the goſpel, promotes a man's own ſalvation, in ſo far as the work of Chriſtianity is woven in with the right diſcharge of the office of the miniſtry. Many miniſters can ſay, that if they had not been miniſters, they had in all appearance loſt their ſouls. The ſubject of the miniſter's work, is the ſame with that of a Chriſtian's; and above all men ſhould he be careful of his heart and intentions, that all be pure and ſpiritual. No man in any work he is called to, is under ſo ſtrict a ne-

a neceſſity of dependence on the influence and aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, both for gifts and grace. And are not all theſe great helps unto our own ſalvation?

2*dly*, The ſecond advantage is, *Thou ſhalt ſave them that hear thee.* There is little hope of that man's being uſeful to ſave others, that minds not his own ſalvation; and therefore the apoſtle puts them in this order, *thyſelf*, and then, *them that hear thee.*

This deſcription of the people, *them that hear thee*, ſaith, That the principle work of a miniſter is preaching; and the principle benefit people have by them, is to hear the Lord's word from them; though there be a *ſeeing* (*i. e.* of their holy converſation) that is alſo uſeful, Phil. iv. 9. But the apoſtle knew no ſuch miniſters as were only to be ſeen in worldly pomp and grandeur, and ſeldom or never heard preaching.

Thou ſhalt ſave them. The great end of both preaching and hearing, is ſalvation; and if ſalvation were more deſigned by preachers and hearers, it would be more frequently the effect of the action.

Thou ſhalt ſave them. Thou ſhalt, by the Lord's bleſſing on that miniſtry, be ſucceſsful in converting ſinners, and in building up of ſaints in holineſs and faith unto ſalvation. Not that miniſters are of themſelves able by all their endeavours to carry on this great end; they are only God's tools and inſtruments, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. Concerning this,

(1.) We find, that the Lord hath appointed this great ordinance of the goſpel miniſtry for this end, the ſaving of men, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. It is *thro' their word that men believe*, John xvii. 20. And divine appointment of the means, declares both it to be uſeful, and the end to be hopeful.

(2.) He hath alſo given many promiſes of his preſence, bleſſing, and ſucceſs, to follow and attend them whom he ſends on this great errand. Chriſt's firſt calling of the apoſtles had this promiſe in it, *I will make you fiſhers of men*; which not only declared what

that

that employment was he called them unto, but it aſſured them of ſucceſs in it. At his leaving of them, Matth. xxviii. 20. he promiſed *to be with them unto the end of the world.* And this promiſe is as good to us as it was to them.

(3.) He hath alſo revealed much of his mind about miniſters duty, in order to this end of ſaving men. This alſo makes the end more hopeful.

(4.) We find, that the Lord doth qualify and fit them whom he makes ſucceſsful. He makes men *able miniſters of the new teſtament*, the word of life, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. And ſtill, according to the ſucceſs the Lord hath a mind to bleſs a man with, gifts and qualifications, and aſſiſtance, are proportionably given. The apoſtles, that had the greateſt harveſt to gather in, were made the ſtrongeſt labourers: and, though in a far inferior degree, the ſame method is obſerved by the Lord in dealing with and by ordinary miniſters. It is true, that always the moſt able and learned miniſters are not moſt ſucceſsful; yet, generally, the moſt ſkilful labourers are moſt bleſſed. Neither are the moſt learned and able men for parts moſt fit and ſkilful in dealing with ſouls at all times.

Now, having opened the words, we ſhall return to the queſtion to be reſolved,

By what means may miniſters beſt win ſouls?

In ſpeaking to which, I ſhall,

1. Shew what this text ſaith unto this purpoſe. And then,

2. Give ſome further account thereof from other ſcriptures. And,

3. Apply it both to miniſters and people.

I. *What this text ſpeaks about this matter.* It looks two ways upon this queſtion. 1. It gives a direct anſwer unto it: and points forth duty. 2. It gives an encouraging promiſe of the good effect and fruit

of the diſcharge of the duty. I ſhall carry on both together.

1. *Take heed unto thyſelf.* Wouldſt thou be a ſaved and ſucceſsful miniſter? *Take heed unto thyſelf.* Such warnings imply always a caſe of difficulty and danger wherein he is that gets them.

Take heed unto thyſelf in theſe things.

1*ſt*, Take heed that thou be a ſound and ſincere believer. The importance of ſincere godlineſs in a miniſter, is written in the deep wounds that the church of Chriſt hath received by the hands of ungodly miniſters. It hath been made a queſtion, Whether an ungodly man can be a miniſter? but it is none, that ſuch men are in a moſt deſperate condition: Matth. vii. 22, 23. *Depart from me;* not becauſe you ran unſent, or preached error inſtead of truth, or preached poorly and meanly, (all great ſins in themſelves); but becauſe *you work iniquity;* the uſual expreſſion of entire ungodlineſs. What uſe the Lord may make of the gifts (for great gifts he gives to the worſt of men) of ungodly men, even in the miniſtry of the goſpel, is one of his deep paths. But no man can reaſonably imagine, that a walker in the way to hell can be a fit and uſeful guide to them that mind to go to heaven. If a man would have peace in his conſcience, and ſucceſs in his work of the miniſtry, let him take good heed to this, that he be a ſound Chriſtian. There is a ſpecial difficulty for a miniſter to know his grace. Gifts and grace have deceived many with their likeneſs; although the difference be great, both in itſelf, and to an enlightened eye.

2*dly*, Take heed to thyſelf, that thou be a called and ſent miniſter. This is of great importance as to ſucceſs. He that can ſay, "Lord, thou haſt ſent "me;" may boldly add, "Lord, go with me, and "bleſs me." It is good when a man is ſerious in this inquiry. It is to be feared that many run, and never aſked this queſtion; ſo is it ſeen in their ſpeed and ſucceſs. Jer. xxiii. 32. *I ſent them not, therefore they ſhall*

ſhall not profit this people at all, is a ſtanding rule to this day.

Theſe things, if found, may ſerve to ſatisfy a miniſter's conſcience, that Jeſus Chriſt hath ſent him.

(1.) If the heart be filled with a ſingle deſire after the great end of the miniſtry, the glory of God in the ſalvation of men. Every work that God calls a man to, he makes the end of it amiable. This deſire ſometimes attends mens firſt converſion. Paul was called to be a ſaint and an apoſtle at once, Acts ix.; and ſo have many been called to be ſaints and miniſters together. If it be not ſo, yet this is found with him that Chriſt calls, that when he is moſt ſpiritual and ſerious, when his heart is moſt under the impreſſions of holineſs, and he is neareſt to God in communion with him; then are ſuch deſires after the ſerving of Jeſus Chriſt in the miniſtry moſt powerful. And the ſincerity of his deſire is alſo to be examined: and when it is found, it adds greatly to a man's peace: when his heart bears him witneſs, that it is neither riches, nor honour, nor eaſe, nor the applauſe of men, that he ſeeks after, but ſingly Chriſt's honour in the ſaving of men.

(2.) It helps to clear a man's call, that there hath been a conſcientious diligence in all the means of attaining fitneſs for this great work. That love to the end that doth not direct and determine unto the uſe of the appointed means, may juſtly be ſuſpected as irregular, and not flowing from the Holy Ghoſt. Even extraordinary officers ſeem not to have been above the uſe of ordinary means, 2 Tim. iv. 13. old dying Paul ſends for his books and papers.

(3.) A competent fitneſs for the work of the miniſtry, is another proof of a man's call to it. The Lord calls no man to a work for which he doth not qualify. Though a ſincere humble man (as all miniſters ſhould be) may and ſhould think little of any meaſure he hath, whether compared with the greater meaſures of others, or conſidered with regard unto the weight and

and worth of the work; yet there muſt be ſome confidence as to his competency, for clearing a man's call, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. What this competency is, is not eaſy at all times to determine. Singular neceſſities of the church may extend or intend this matter of competent fitneſs. But in general there muſt be, 1. A competent knowledge of goſpel-myſteries. 2. A competent ability of utterance to the edifying of others. This is *aptneſs to teach*, required of the apoſtle in 1 Tim. iii. 2.; and Titus i. 9. that a miniſter be *able, by ſound doctrine, to exhort and to convince gainſayers.*

(4.) The ſavour of a man's miniſtry on the hearts and conſciences of others, both miniſters and people, helps much to clear a man's call. So that indeed ordinarily a man can never be ſo well confirmed in the faith of his being called of God, until he make ſome eſſay in this work. Deacons muſt firſt be proved, 1 Tim. iii. 10.; much more miniſters. A ſingle teſtimony given by miniſters and Chriſt, that the word diſpenſed by the man is ſavoury, and hath effect on the conſcience, is a great confirmation; eſpecially if ſound converſion of ſome follow his labours. That is indeed a ſeal of his miniſtry, 2 Cor. iii. 3. and 1 Cor. ix. 2.

3*dly*, Take heed unto thyſelf, that thou be a lively thriving Chriſtian. See that all thy religion run not in the channel of thy employment. It is found by experience, that as it fares with a miniſter in the frame of his heart, and thriving of the work of God in his ſoul, ſo doth it fare with his miniſtry both in its vigour and effects. A carnal frame, a dead heart, and a looſe walk, makes cold and unprofitable preaching. And how common is it for miniſters to neglect their own vineyard? When we read the word, we read it as miniſters, to know what we ſhould teach, rather than what we ſhould learn as Chriſtians. Unleſs there be great heed taken, it will be found, that

our

our miniſtry, and labour therein, may eat out the life of our Chriſtianity. Not that there is any diſcord betwixt them; but rather a friendly harmony, when each hath its place and reſpect. The honeſt believer meditates, that he may excite his grace; and miniſters too often meditate only to increaſe their gifts. When we preach, the ſincere hearer drinks in the word; and it may be we ſeldom mix faith with it, to grow thereby. O how hard is it to be a miniſter and a Chriſtian in ſome of theſe acts! We are ſtill converſant about the things of God; it is our ſtudy all the week long. This is our great advantage. But take heed to thyſelf, leſt ordinary meddling with divine things bring on an ordinary and indifferent impreſſion of them; and then their fruit to thee, and thy benefit by them, is almoſt gone, and hardly recovered.

4*thly*, Take heed unto thyſelf in reference to all the trials and temptations thou mayeſt meet with. Be on your guard, *watch in all things*, 2 Tim. iv. 5: No men are ſhot at more by Satan than miniſters, and he triumphs not more over the foils of any than theirs. And Chriſt is liberal in his warnings of dangers, and in his promiſes of help in them.

2. The ſecond word in the text to this purpoſe of directing miniſters how to be uſeful to others, is *Take heed unto thy doctrine.* Art thou a miniſter? Thou muſt be a preacher. An unpreaching miniſter is a ſort of contradiction. Yea, every ſort of preaching is not enough; thou muſt take heed unto thy doctrine what it is.

Here is a warrant for ſtudying what we are to teach and what we have taught people. But the great matter is to take heed, or ſtudy aright. Students commonly need little direction about ordinary ſtudy. But concerning the doctrine, I ſhall entreat to take heed unto it in theſe things.

1*ſt*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be a divine truth: *Let a man ſpeak as the oracles of God.* 1. Pet.

Pet. iv. 11. And therefore it is needful that miniſters be well acquainted with the holy ſcriptures. A bad token of the temper of that man that reliſhes any book more than the word of God. The world is full of books written on pretence and deſign to explain the ſcriptures; and mens ſtudies are full of them. There is alſo a bleſſing in them, and good uſe to be made of them; but alſo a bad uſe is made of them. Many miniſters have found, that they have preached better, and to more profit to the people, when they got their ſermon by meditation on the word, and prayer, than by turning over many authors. From this neglect of the word alſo come a great many doctrines, that are learned by man, and borrowed from philoſophy; which though they may have ſome truth in them, yet ſince it is divine truth that a miniſter ſhould bring forth to the people, he ſhould not reſt on ſuch low things.

2*dly*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be plain, and ſuited to the capacity of the hearers. Learned preaching (as it is called) is a vanity, pleaſing principally to ſuch as neither deſign nor deſire edification. True godly learning conſiſts in preaching plainly; and therein is no ſmall difficulty. Two things would help to plain preaching. 1. Clearneſs of knowledge. The alledged depth of our doctrine often proceeds from our own darkneſs. 2. Humility and ſelf-denial. We muſt not ſeek ourſelves, nor the applauſe of men; but God's glory, and mens ſalvation. It is found, that the holieſt miniſters preach moſt plainly, and the plaineſt preachers are moſt ſucceſsful.

3*dly*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be grave and ſolid, and weighty; *ſound ſpeech that cannot be condemned*, Tit. ii. 8. Deep and weighty impreſſions of the things of God upon a man's own heart, would greatly advance this. A miniſter's ſpirit is known in the gravity or lightneſs of his doctrine.

II. But

II. But now we come to the ſecond thing propoſed, to *give ſome anſwer to this queſtion from other things in the word.*

And I ſhall, 1. Shew ſome things that muſt be laid to heart about the end, the ſaving of ſouls; and then, 2. Shall give ſome advice about the means.

1. About the end, the winning of ſouls. This is to bring them to God. It is not to win them to us, or to engage them into a party, or to the eſpouſal of ſome opinions and practices, ſuppoſing them to be never ſo right, and conſonant to the word of God. But the winning of them is, to bring them out of nature into a ſtate of grace, that they may be fitted for, and in due time admitted into everlaſting glory.

Concerning which great end, theſe few things ſhould be laid deeply to heart by all that would ſerve the Lord in being inſtrumental in reaching it.

1ſt, The exceeding height and excellency of this end is to be laid to heart. It is a wonder of condeſcendence, that the Lord will make uſe of men in promoting it. To be workers together with God in ſo great a buſineſs, is no ſmall honour. The great value of mens ſouls, the greatneſs of the miſery they are delivered from, and of the happineſs they are advanced to, with the manifold glory of God ſhining in all, makes the work of ſaving men great and excellent. Preaching the goſpel, and ſuffering for it, are ſervices that angels are not employed in. Mean and low thoughts of the great end of the miniſtry, as they are diſſonant from truth, are alſo great hindrances of due endeavours after the attaining the end.

2dly, The great difficulty of ſaving ſouls muſt be laid to heart. The difficulty is undoubted. To attempt it, is to offer violence to mens corrupt natures; and a ſtorming of hell itſelf, whoſe captives all ſinners are. Unleſs this difficulty be laid to heart, miniſters will be confident of their own ſtrength, and ſo miſcarry, and be unfruitful. Whoever proſpers in

winning ſouls, is firſt convinced that it is the arm of Jehovah only can do the work.

3*dly*, The duty of winning ſouls muſt be laid to heart by miniſters. That it is their principle work, and they are under many commands to endeavour it. It is a fault to look on fruit only as a reward of endeavours; ſo it is indeed, and a gracious one: but it ſhould be ſo minded, as the end we would ſtrive for, Col. i. 28, 29.; which, when attained, is ſtill to his praiſe: yet moſt commonly when it is miſſing, it is to our reproach and danger, when it is (as, alas! it is often) through our default.

4*thly*, The great advantage there is to the labourer by his ſucceſs, is to be pondered. Great is the gain by one ſoul. *He that winneth ſouls, is* happy as well as *wiſe*, Prov. xi. 30. Dan. xii. 3. Won ſouls are a miniſter's *crown*, and *glory*, and *joy*. Phil. iv. 1. 1 Theſſ. ii. 20. How far is this account above all others that a man can give of his miniſtry? Theſe things fixed upon the heart, would enliven us in all endeavours to attain this excellent end.

2. For advice about the means, I ſhall add theſe few, beſides what hath been ſaid.

1*ſt*, Let miniſters, if they would win ſouls, procure and retain amongſt the people a perſuaſion of their being ſent of God; that they are *Chriſt's miniſters*, 1 Cor iv. 1. It is not confident aſſerting of it, nor juſtifying the lawfulneſs of our eccleſiaſtical calling, though there be ſome uſe of theſe things at ſome times: but it is ability, painfulneſs, faithfulneſs, humility, and ſelf-denial, and, in a word, conformity to our Lord Jeſus in his miniſtry, that will conſtrain people to ſay, and think, that we are ſent of God. Nicodemus comes with this impreſſion of Chriſt, John iii. 2. *A teacher come from God.* It is certain, that theſe thoughts in people further the reception of the goſpel; Gal. iv. 14. *Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus.*

2*dly*,

2*dly*, Let miniſters, if they would win ſouls, purchaſe and maintain the people's love to their perſons. And this is beſt done, by loving of them, and dealing lovingly and patiently with them. There ſhould be no ſtriving with them, eſpecially about worldly things: yea, *meekneſs to them that oppoſe themſelves*, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25, 26. It is of great advantage to have their love. How carefully doth Paul ſue for it in ſeveral epiſtles; and condeſcend to intreat and make apologies, when indeed he had not wronged them, but they only did imagine he had wronged them! 2 Cor. xi.

3*dly*, It would further the winning of ſouls, to deal particularly and perſonally with them; not always nor altogether in public, Col i. 28. Acts xx. 20, 21. Great fruit hath conſtantly followed the conſcientious diſcharge of this duty. The ſetting of it up in Geneva, did produce incredible fruits of piety, as Calvin reports: when the miniſters, and ſome of the elders, went from houſe to houſe, and dealt particularly with the people's conſciences. And we are not without many inſtances of the fruit of this mean in our own time, and in theſe nations. Bleſſed be the Lord for the labourers, and their ſucceſs.

4*thly*, Miniſters muſt pray much, if they would be ſucceſsful. The apoſtles ſpent their time this way, Acts vi. 3. Yea, our Lord Jeſus preached all day, and continued all night alone in prayer to God. Miniſters ſhould be much in prayer. They uſe to reckon how many hours they ſpend in reading and ſtudy; it were far better both with ourſelves and the church of God, if more time were ſpent in prayer. Luther's ſpending three hours daily in ſecret prayer, Bradford's ſtudying on his knees, and other inſtances of men in our time, are talked of rather than imitated. Miniſters ſhould pray much for themſelves; for they have corruptions like other men, and have temptations that none but miniſters are aſſaulted with. They ſhould pray for their meſſage. How ſweet and

eaſy is it for a miniſter, (and likely it is to be the more profitable to the people), to bring forth that ſcripture as food to the ſouls of his people, that he hath got opened to his own heart by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, in the exerciſe of faith and love in prayer! A miniſter ſhould pray for a bleſſing on the word; and he ſhould be much in ſeeking God particularly for the people. It may be this may be the reaſon why ſome miniſters of meaner gifts and parts are more ſucceſsful, than ſome that are far above them in abilities; not becauſe they preach better, ſo much as becauſe they pray more. Many good ſermons are loſt for lack of much prayer in ſtudy.

But becauſe the miniſtry of the word is the main inſtrument for winning ſouls, I ſh ll therefore add ſomewh.t more particularly concerning this, and that both as to the matter and manner of preaching.

1. For the ſubject-matter of goſpel-preaching, it is determined by the apoſtle expreſsly to be *Chriſt crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. Two thin s miniſters have to do about him in preaching him to them that are without. 1. To ſet him forth to people, Gal. iii. 1.; to paint him in his love, excellency, and ability to ſave. 2. To offer him unto them freely, fully, without any limitation as to ſinners, or their ſinful ſtate. And then Chriſt's laws or will to be publiſhed to them that receive him, and are his, for the rule of their walk; and his promiſes, for the meaſure and foundation of all their hopes and expectations; and his grace and fulneſs, for their ſupply in every caſe, till they be brought to heaven. This was the ſimplicity of the goſpel that remained but a little while in the Chriſtian church: for ceremonies among the Jews, and ſinful mixtures of vain philoſophy amongſt the Gentiles, Col. ii. did by degrees ſo corrupt the goſpel, that the myſtery of iniquity ripened in the production of Antichriſt. It was a ſad obſervation of the fourth century, that it became a matter of learning and ingenuity to be a Chriſtian. The meaning was, That

too

too much weight was laid on notions, and matters of opinion; and leſs regard had unto the ſoundneſs of the heart, and holineſs of the life. In the beginning of the reformation from popery, the worthies whom God raiſed up in ſeveral countries, did excellently in retrieving the ſimplicity of the goſpel from the popiſh mixtures. But that good work took a ſtand quickly, and is on the declining greatly. How little of Jeſus Chriſt is there in ſome pulpits! It is ſeen as to ſucceſs, that whatever the law doth in alarming ſinners, it is ſtill the goſpel-voice that is the key that opens the heart to Jeſus Chriſt. Would miniſters win ſouls? Let them have more of Jeſus Chriſt in their dealing with men, and leſs of other things that never profit them that are exerciſed therein.

2. As for the manner of ſucceſsful preaching, I ſhall give it in a negative and poſitive, from theſe two places: 1 Cor. i. 17. and ii. 1,—4.

Firſt, What this negative diſowns, is our inquiry. The words are full: *For Chriſt ſent me not to baptize, but to preach the goſpel: not with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none effect.* Again, *I came not to you with excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom, declaring unto you the teſtimony of God.* Again, *And my ſpeech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom.* Theſe are the words of the Holy Ghoſt concerning a way of preaching that is unprofitable: a way that ſeems was in uſe and reſpect with the Corinthians; and honeſt Paul was deſpiſed by them, for his ſimple and plain way, different from theirs. I ſhall only inſtance in things that this ſcriptural negative doth check and reprove in the way of preaching.

1. The eſtabliſhing and advancing of divine truth upon the foundation of human reaſon; as if there were ſome weakneſs and inſufficiency in thoſe methods and arguments of working on mens conſciences, that the Holy Ghoſt preſcribes. The great foundation of all a miniſter hath to ſay, is, *Thus ſaith the Lord*;

and

and a grave declaration of the teſtimony of God in this matter, is miniſters duty, 1 Cor. ii. 1. and will have more authority on mens conſciences, than many human reaſons. There is a rational preaching, (as it is called), wherein men do not ſatisfy themſelves to make uſe of reaſon as a tool and inſtrument, (and then its uſe is excellent), but will eſtabliſh it as a judge and dictator in all divine matters and truth; and ſo in effect turn all their preaching into little better things than the lectures of the philoſophers of old; ſave that the poor Pagans were more ſincere in their morals, and ſerious in delivering their opinions.

Let a miniſter therefore ſtill think with himſelf, that a plain ſcripture-teſtimony is his main argument; and accordingly let him uſe it. When he teacheth philoſophy, and when he teacheth men the will of God about ſalvation, he is in diſtinct provinces, and his management of his work therein ſhould be very different.

2. It is to preach with *excellency of ſpeech*, and *words of man's wiſdom*, when men think to reach the goſpel end on ſinners by force of even ſpiritual reaſon and perſuaſion. This corrupt thought riſeth in ſome, from an imagination that moral ſuaſion is all that is needful for converting a ſinner: and in ſome this thought riſes on a better account; the light of the glory of God in the goſpel ſhines ſo brightly in upon their own hearts, that they fall into this conceit, that no man can ſtand before that light which they can hold forth: Melancthon's miſtake at firſt, till experience made him wiſer. Haſt thou a clear knowledge of goſpel-myſteries, and the word of exhortation is with thee alſo, ſo that thou art qualified to urge, beſeech and plead warmly with ſinners on Chriſt's behalf? Take heed of this ſnare, leſt thou think, that thy wiſdom and gifts can promote and carry on the goſpel-deſign on men.

3. This alſo is checked in the apoſtle's words, the ſetting forth the beauty of the goſpel by human art.

art. The truth of the goſpel ſhines beſt in its bare propoſal; and its beauty, in its ſimple and naked diſcovery. We may obſerve from the church-hiſtory, that ſtill as ſoundneſs of doctrine, and the power of godlineſs, decayed in the church, the vanity of an affected way of ſpeaking and of writing of divine things came in. Quotations from the fathers, Latin, and languages, are pitiful ornaments unto preaching, if a man deſign converſion and ſoul-edification. And yet more deſpicable are all playing on words, jinglings, and cadencies, (which things are in all the rules of true eloquence juſtly exploded); and yet ſome men reckon much on them. But would any man think his friend in earneſt with him, that would accoſt him in any affair with ſuch ſort of language and geſture?

Secondly. The poſitive is, *in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power*, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

1. Paul preached ſo as gave a demonſtration that the Holy Ghoſt was in him, ſanctifying him. This is a plain and bleſſed thing. Happy is the miniſter that manageth his work ſo, that if the hearers get not a demonſtration of great parts and learning, yet they have a demonſtration of the ſanctifying Spirit of God in the miniſter.

2. Paul preached ſo as gave a demonſtration that the Spirit of God was with him, aſſiſting and helping him in his work; even when he was amongſt them *in much weakneſs, fear, and trembling*, ver. 3. Happy is the miniſter that can preach this way. He muſt be a depender upon aſſiſtance from the Holy Ghoſt.

3. Paul preached ſo as a demonſtration of the power of the Holy Ghoſt was given to the hearts of the hearers. The Spirit of God ſo wrought on them by his power in and by Paul's preaching (2 Cor. iv. 2. *Commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God*). This is the principle thing to be aimed at, and it is the proper ſource of all profitable preaching.

To

To conclude: You that are miniſters, ſuffer a word of exhortation.

Men, brethren, and fathers, you are called to an high and holy calling. Your work is full of danger, full of duty, and full of mercy. You are called to the winning of ſouls; an employment near a-kin unto our Lord's work, the ſaving of ſouls: and the nearer your ſpirits be in conformity to his holy temper and frame, the fitter you are for, and the more fruitful you ſhall be in your work. None of you are ignorant of the begun departure of our glory, and the daily advance of its departure, and the ſad appearances of the Lord's being about to leave us utterly. Should not theſe ſigns of the times rouſe up miniſters unto greater ſeriouſneſs? What can be the reaſon of this ſad obſervation, That when formerly a few lights raiſed up in the nation, did ſhine ſo as to ſcatter and diſpel the darkneſs of popery in a little time; yet now when there are more, and more learned men amongſt us, the darkneſs comes on apace? Is it not becauſe they were men *filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power*; and many of us are only filled with light and knowledge, and inefficacious notions of God's truth? Doth not always the ſpirit of the miniſters propagate itſelf amongſt the people? A lively miniſtry, and lively Chriſtians. Therefore be ſerious at heart; believe, and ſo ſpeak; feel, and ſo ſpeak; and as you teach, ſo do; and then people will feel what you ſay, and obey the word of God.

And, laſtly, for people: It is not unfit that you ſhould hear of miniſters work, and duty, and difficulties. You ſee that all is of your concernment. *All things are for your ſakes*, as the apoſtle ſaith in another caſe.

Then only I intreat you, 1. Pity us. We are not angels, but men of like paſſions with yourſelves. Be fuller of charity than of cenſure. We have all that you have to do about the ſaving of our own ſouls; and a great work beſides about the ſaving of yours.

We

We have all your difficulties as Chriſtians; and ſome that you are not acquainted with, that are only miniſters temptations and trials.

2. Help us in our work. If you can do any thing, help us in the work of winning ſouls. What can we do, ſay you? O! a great deal. Be but won to Chriſt, and we are made. Make haſte to heaven, that you and we may meet joyfully before the throne of God and the Lamb.

3. Pray for us. How often and how earneſtly doth Paul beg the prayers of the churches! And if he did ſo, much more ſhould we beg them, and you grant them; for our neceſſities and weakneſſes are greater than his: 2 Theſſ. iii. 1, 2. *Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreaſonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

VINDICATION

OF THE

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE

CONCERNING

JUSTIFICATION,

And of its PREACHERS and PROFESSORS,

From the unjuſt charge of

ANTINOMIANISM.

In a LETTER *from the* AUTHOR, *to a* MINISTER *in the Country.*

YOUR earneſt deſire of information about ſome difference amongſt Nonconformiſts in London, whereof you hear ſo much by flying reports, and profeſs you know ſo little of the truth thereof, is the cauſe of this writing.

You know, that not many months ago there was fair-like appearance of unity betwixt the two moſt conſiderable parties on that ſide; and their differences having been rather in practice than principle, about church-order and communion, ſeemed eaſily reconcileable, where a ſpirit of love, and of a ſound mind, was at work. But how ſhort was the calm? For quickly aroſe a greater ſtorm from another quarter; and a quarrel began upon higher points, even on no leſs than the doctrine of the grace of God in Jeſus

Chriſt,

Chriſt, and the juſtification of a ſinner by faith alone. Some think, that the reprinting of Dr. Criſp's book gave the firſt riſe to it. But we muſt look farther back for its true ſpring. It is well known, but little conſidered, what a great progreſs *Arminianiſm* had made in this nation before the beginning of the civil war. And ſurely it hath loſt little ſince it ended. What can be the reaſon why the very parliaments in the reign of James I. and Charles I. were ſo alarmed with *Arminianiſm*, as may be read in hiſtory, and is remembred by old men; and that now for a long time there hath been no talk, no fear of it; as if *Arminianiſm* were dead and buried, and no man knows where its grave is? Is not the true reaſon to be found in its univerſal prevailing in the nation?

But that which concerneth our caſe, is, that the middle way betwixt the *Arminians* and the *Orthodox*, had been eſpouſed, and ſtrenuouſly defended and promoted, by ſome Nonconformiſts, of great note for piety and parts; and uſually ſuch men that are for middle ways in points of doctrine, have a greater kindneſs for that extreme they go half-way to, than for that which they go half-way from. And the notions thereof were imbibed by a great many ſtudents, who laboured (through the iniquity of the times) under the great diſadvantage of the want of grave and ſound divines, to direct and aſſiſt their ſtudies at univerſities; and therefore contented themſelves with ſtudying ſuch Engliſh authors as had gone in a path untrod, both by our predeceſſors, and by the proteſtant univerſities abroad.

Theſe notions have been preached, and wrote againſt, by ſeveral divines amongſt themſelves; and the different opinions have been, till of late, managed with ſome moderation; to which our being all borne down by perſecution, did ſomewhat contribute.

It is a ſad, but true obſervation, That no contentions are more eaſily kindled, more fiercely purſued, and more hardly compoſed, than thoſe of divines;

ſometimes from their zeal for truth; and ſometimes from worſe principles, that may act in them, as well as in other men.

The ſubject of the controverſy is, about the juſtifying grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt. Owned it is by both: and both fear it be abuſed: either by turning it into wantonneſs; hence the noiſe of *Antinomianiſm*: or by corrupting it with the mixture of works; hence the fears, on the other ſide, of *Arminianiſm*. Both parties diſown the name caſt upon them. The one will not be called *Arminians*: and the other hate both name and thing of *Antinomianiſm* truly ſo called. Both ſometimes ſay the ſame thing, and profeſs their aſſent to the doctrinal articles of the church of England, to the Confeſſion of Faith and Catechiſms compoſed at Weſtminſter, and to the Harmony of the Confeſſions of all the reformed churches, in theſe doctrines of grace. And, if both be candid in this profeſſion, it is very ſtrange that there ſhould be any controverſy among them.

Let us therefore, firſt, take a view of the parties, and then of their principles. As to the party ſuſpected of *Antinomianiſm* and *Libertiniſm*, in this city; it is plain, that the churches wherein they are concerned, are more ſtrict and exact in trying of them that offer themſelves unto their communion, as to their faith and holineſs, before their admitting them; in the engagements laid on them to a goſpel-walking at their admiſſion, and in their inſpection over them afterwards. As to their converſations, they are generally of the more regular and exact frame; and the fruits of holineſs in their lives, to the praiſe of God, and honour of the goſpel, cannot with modeſty be denied. Is it not unaccountable, to charge a people with licentiouſneſs, when the changers cannot deny, and ſome cannot well bear the ſtrictneſs of their walk? It is commonly ſaid, that it is only their principles, and the tendency of them to looſe walking, that they blame. But, waving that at preſent, it ſeems not

fair

fair to charge a people with licentious doctrines, when the profeſſors thereof are approved of for their godlineſs; and when they do ſincerely profeſs, that their godlineſs begun with, and is promoted by the faith of their principles. Let it not be miſtaken, if I here make a compariſon betwixt *Papiſts* and *Proteſtants*. The latter did always profeſs the doctrine of juſtification by faith alone. This was blaſphemy in the Papiſts ears. They ſtill did, and do cry out againſt it, as a licentious doctrine, and deſtructive of good works. Many ſufficient anſwers have been given unto this unjuſt charge. But to my purpoſe: The wonder was, that the Papiſts were not convinced by the ſplendid holineſs of the old believers, and by the viſible truth of their holy practice; and their profeſſing, that as long as they lived in the blindneſs and darkneſs of popery, they were profane; and that as ſoon as God revealed the goſpel to them, and had wrought in them the faith thereof, they were ſanctified, and led other lives. So witneſſed the noble lord Cobham, who ſuffered in K. Henry V.'s time, above an hundred years before Luther. His words at his examination before the archbiſhop of Canterbury, and his clergy, were theſe. "As for that virtuous man, Wickliff, (for "with his doctrine he was charged), whoſe judgment "ye ſo highly diſdain; I ſhall ſay of my part, both "before God and man, that before I knew that de"ſpiſed doctrine of his, I never abſtained from ſin; "but ſince I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it "hath otherwiſe, I truſt, been with me. So much "grace could I never find in all your glorious inſtruc"tions." *Fox's book of Martyrs, vol.* 1. *p.* 640, *col.* 2. *edit.* 1664. And ſince I am on that excellent book, I intreat you to read Mr. Patrick Hamilton's little treatiſe, to which Frith doth preface, and Fox doth add ſome explication, *vol.* 2. *p.* 181,—192.; where ye will find the old plain Proteſtant truth about law and goſpel, delivered without any ſchool-terms. To this, add, in your reading, in the ſame *vol.* 2. *p.* 497,—509.

Hereſies

Heresies and errors falsly charged on Tindal's writings; where we will see the old faith of the saints in its simplicity; and the old craft and cunning of the Antichristian party, in slandering the truth. I must, for my part, confess, that these plain declarations of gospel-truth have a quite other savour with me, than the dry insipid accounts thereof given by pretenders to human wisdom.

But passing these things, let us look to principles, and that with respect to their native and regular influence on sanctification. And I am willing, that that should determine the matter, next to the consonancy of the principles themselves to the word of God. It can be no doctrine of God, that is not according to godliness. Some think, that if good works, and holiness, and repentance, be allowed no room in justification, that there is no room left for them in the world, and in the practice of believers. So hard seems it to be to some, to keep in their eye the certain fixed bounds betwixt justification and sanctification. There is no difference betwixt a justified and a sanctified man; for he is always the same person that partakes of these privileges. But justification and sanctification differ greatly, in many respects; as is commonly known. But to come a little closer:

The party here suspected of *Antinomianism*, do confidently protest, before God, angels, and men, That they espouse no new doctrine about the grace of God and justification, and the other coincident points, but what the reformers at home and abroad did teach, and all the Protestant churches do own. And that in sum is: "That a law-condemned sinner is freely justified "by God's grace, through the redemption that is in "Jesus Christ; that he is justified only for the righ-"teousness of Christ imputed to him by God of his "free grace, and received by faith alone as an instru-"ment; which faith is the gift of the same grace." For guarding against licentiousness, they constantly teach

teach, out of God's word, "That without holiness "no man can see God: That all that believe truly "on Jesus Christ, as they are justified by the sprink-"ling of his blood, so are they sanctified by the ef-"fusion of his Spirit: that all that boast of their faith "in Christ, and yet live after their own lusts, and the "course of this world, have no true faith at all; but "do, in their profession, and contradicting practice, "blaspheme the name of God, and the doctrine of "his grace; and continuing so, shall perish with a "double destruction, beyond that of the openly pro-"fane, that make no profession." And when they find any such in their communion, which is exceeding rarely, they cast them out as dead branches. They teach, "That as the daily study of sanctificati-"on is a necessary exercise to all that are in Christ; "so the rule of their direction therein, is the holy "spotless law of God in Christ's hand: That the "Holy Ghost is the beginner and advancer of this "work, and faith in Jesus Christ the great mean "thereof: That no man can be holy till he be in "Christ, and united to him by faith; and that no "man is truly in Christ, but he is thereby sanctified. "They preach the law, to condemn all flesh out of "Christ, and to shew thereby to people the necessity "of betaking themselves to him for salvation." See the savoury words of blessed Tindal, called the *apostle of England*, in his letter to John Frith, written Jan. 1533; *Book of Martyrs, vol. 2. p.* 308. "Ex-"pound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses, "to condemn all flesh, and prove all men sinners, and "all deeds under the law, before mercy have taken "away the condemnation thereof, to be sin, and dam-"nable; and then as a faithful minister, set a broach "the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let the wounded "consciences drink of the water of him. And then "shall your preaching be with power, and not as the "hypocrites. And the Spirit of God shall work with "you; and all consciences shall bear record unto you,

"and

" and feel that it is ſo. And all doctrine that caſteth " a miſt on theſe two, to ſhadow and hide them, I " mean the law of God, and mercy of Chriſt; that re- " ſiſt you with all your power." And ſo do we.

What is there in all this to be offended with? Is not this enough to vindicate our doctrine from any tendency to licentiouſneſs? I am afraid, that there are ſome things wherein we differ more than they think fit yet to expreſs. And I ſhall gueſs at them.

1. The firſt is about the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. This righteouſneſs of Chriſt, in his active and paſſive obedience, hath been aſſerted by Proteſtant divines, to be not only the procuring and meritorious cauſe of our juſtification; for this the Papiſts own; but the matter; as the imputation of it is the form of our juſtification: though I think, that our logical terms are not ſo adapted for ſuch divine myſteries. But whatever propriety or impropriety be in ſuch ſchool-terms, the common Proteſtant doctrine hath been, That a convinced ſinner ſeeking juſtification, muſt have nothing in his eye but this righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as God propoſeth nothing elſe to him; and that God in juſtifying a ſinner, accept him in this righteouſneſs only, when he imputes it to him.

Now, about the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt ſome ſay, " That it belongs only to the perſon of " Chriſt: he was under the law, and bound to keep " it for himſelf; that he might be a fit Mediator, with- " out ſpot or blemiſh. That it is a qualification in the " Mediator, rather than a benefit acquired by him, to " be communicated to his people." For they will not allow " this perſonal righteouſneſs of Chriſt to be im- " puted to us any otherwiſe than in the merit of it, as " purchaſing for us a more eaſy law of grace; in the " obſervation whereof they place all our juſtifying righ- " teouſneſs:" underſtanding hereby " our own per- " ſonal inherent holineſs, and nothing elſe." They hold, " That Chriſt died to merit this of the Father, " viz. that we might be juſtified upon eaſier terms

" under

"under the gospel, than those of the law of innocen-
"cy. Instead of justification by perfect obedience,
"we are now to be justified by our own evangelical
"righteousness, made up of faith, repentance, and
"sincere obedience." And if we hold not with them in this, they tell the world, we are enemies to evangelical holiness, slighting the practice of all good works, and allowing our hearers to live as they list. Thus they slander the preachers of free grace, because we do not place justification in our own inherent holiness; but in Christ's perfect righteousness, imputed to us upon our believing in him. Which faith, we teach, purifies the heart, and always inclines to holiest of life. Neither do we hold any faith to be true and saving, that doth not shew itself by good works; without which no man is, or can be justified, either in his own conscience, or before men. But it doth not hence follow, that we cannot be justified in the sight of God by faith only, as the apostle Paul asserts the latter, and the apostle James the former, in a good agreement.

2. There appears to be some difference, or misunderstanding of one another, about the true notion and nature of justifying faith. Divines commonly distinguish betwixt the *direct act of faith*, and the *reflex act*. The *direct act* is properly justifying and saving faith; by which a lost sinner comes to Christ, and relies upon him for salvation. The *reflex act* is the looking back of the soul upon a former act of faith. A rational creature can reflect upon his own acts, whether they be acts of reason, faith or unbelief.

A *direct act* of saving faith, is that by which a lost sinner goes out of himself to Christ for help, relying upon him only for salvation. A *reflex act* ariseth from the sense that faith gives of its own inward act, upon a serious review. The truth and sincerity of which is further cleared up to the conscience, by the genuine fruits of an unfeigned faith, appearing to all men in our good lives, and holy conversation. But

for as plain as theſe things be, yet we find we are frequently miſtaken by others: and we wonder at the miſtake; for we dare not aſcribe to ſome learned and good men, the principles of ignorance, or wilfulneſs, from whence miſtakes in plain caſes uſually proceed. When we do preſs ſinners to come to Chriſt by a direct act of faith, conſiſting in an humble reliance upon him for mercy and pardon; they will underſtand us, whether we will or not, of a reflex act of faith, by which a man knows and believes, that his ſins are pardoned, and that Chriſt is his: when they might eaſily know, that we mean no ſuch thing. Mr. Walter Marſhall, in his excellent book, lately publiſhed, hath largely opened this, and the true controverſy of this day, though it be eight or nine years ſince he died.

3. We ſeem to differ about the intereſt, and room, and place, that faith hath in juſtification. That we are juſtified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt, is ſo plainly a New Teſtament truth, that no man pretending never ſo barely to the Chriſtian name, denies it. The Papiſts own it; and the Socinians, and Arminians, and all own it. But how different are their ſenſes of it? And indeed you cannot more ſpeedily and certainly judge of the ſpirit of a man, than by his real inward ſenſe of this phraſe, (if you could reach it), *A ſinner is juſtified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt.* Some ſay, That faith in Jeſus Chriſt juſtifies as it is a work, by the *credere*; as if it came in the room of perfect obedience, required by the law. Some, That faith juſtifies, as it is informed and animated by charity. So the Papiſts who plainly confound juſtification and ſanctification. Some ſay, that faith juſtifies, as it is a fulfilling of the condition of the new covenant, *If thou believeſt thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Nay, they will not hold there; but they will have this faith to juſtify, as it hath a principle and fitneſs in it to diſpoſe to ſincere obedience. The plain old Proteſtant doctrine is, That the place of faith in juſtification is only that

of

of a hand or inſtrument, receiving the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for which only we are juſtified. So that though great ſcholars do often confound themſelves and others, in their diſputations about faith's juſtifying a ſinner; every poor plain believer hath the marrow of this myſtery feeding his heart; and he can readily tell you, That to be juſtified by faith, is to be juſtified by Chriſt's righteouſneſs, apprehended by faith.

4. We ſeem to miſunderſtand one another about the two Adams, and eſpecially the latter. See Rom. v. 12. to the end. In that excellent ſcripture a compariſon is inſtituted, which if we did duly underſtand, and agree in, we ſhould not readily differ in the main things of the goſpel. The apoſtle there tells us, that the firſt Adam ſtood in the room of all his natural poſterity. He had their ſtock in his hand. While he ſtood they ſtood in him; when he fell, they fell with him. By his fall he derived ſin and death to all them that ſpring from him by natural generation. This is the ſad ſide. But he tells us in oppoſition thereto, and in comparing therewith, that Chriſt, the ſecond man, is the new head of the redeemed world. He ſtands in their room: his obedience is theirs; and he communicates to his ſpiritual offspring, the juſt contrary to what the firſt ſinful Adam doth to his natural offspring; righteouſneſs inſtead of guilt and ſin, life inſtead of death, juſtification inſtead of condemnation, and eternal life inſtead of hell deſerved. So that I think the 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters of the epiſtle to the Romans, for the myſtery of juſtification; and the 6th, 7th, and 8th, for the myſtery of ſanctification, deſerve our deep ſtudy. But what ſay others about Chriſt's being the ſecond Adam? We find them unwilling to ſpeak of it; and when they do, it is quite alien from the ſcope of the apoſtle in that chapter. Thus to us they ſeem to ſay, "That "God as a rector, ruler, governor, hath reſolved to "ſave men by Jeſus Chriſt: That the rule of this

" government is the goſpel, as a new law of grace:
" That Jeſus Chriſt is ſet at the head of this rectoral
" government: That in that ſtate he ſits in glory,
" ready and able, out of his purchaſe and merits, to
" give juſtification and eternal life to all that can bring
" good evidence of their having complied with the
" terms and conditions of the law of grace." Thus they antedate the laſt day, and hold forth Chriſt as a Judge, rather than a Saviour. Luther was wont to warn people of this diſtinction, frequently in his comment on the epiſtle to the Galatians. And no other headſhip to Chriſt do we find ſome willing to admit, but what belongs to his kingly office. As for his ſuretiſhip, and being the ſecond Adam, and a public perſon, ſome treat it with contempt. I have heard, that Dr. Thomas Goodwin was in his youth an Arminian, or at leaſt inclining that way; but was by the Lord's grace brought off, by Dr. Sibb's clearing up to him this ſame point, of Chriſt's being the head and repreſentative of all his people. Now though we maintain ſtedfaſtly this headſhip of Jeſus Chriſt, yet we ſay not, that there is an actual partaking of his fulneſs of grace, till we be in him by faith; tho' this *faith* is alſo *given us on Chriſt's behalf*, Phil. i. 29. and we *believe through grace*, Acts xviii. 27. And we know no grace, we can call nothing grace, we care for no grace, but what comes from this head, the Saviour of the body. But ſo much ſhall ſerve to point forth the main things of difference and miſtakes.

Is it not a little provoking, that ſome are ſo captious, that no miniſter can preach in the hearing of ſome, " of the freedom of God's grace; of the imputation " of Chriſt's righteouſneſs; of ſole and ſingle believ- " ing on him for righteouſneſs, and eternal life; of " the impoſſibility of a natural man's doing any good " work before he be in Chriſt; of the impoſſibility " of the mixing of man's righteouſneſs and works, " with Chriſt's righteouſneſs, in the buſineſs of juſti- " fication; and ſeveral other points," but he is immediately

mediately called, or ſuſpected to be an *Antinomian?* If we ſay, that faith in Jeſus Chriſt is neither work, nor condition, nor qualification, in juſtification; but is a mere inſtrument, receiving (as an empty hand receiveth the freely-given alms) the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and that, in its very act, it is a renouncing of all things but the gift of grace; the fire is kindled. So that it is come to that, as Mr Chriſtopher Fowler ſaid, "That he that will not be *Antichriſtian*, muſt "be called an *Antinomian.*" Is there a miniſter in London, who did not preach, ſome twenty, ſome thirty years ago, according to their ſtanding, that ſame doctrine now by ſome called *Antinomian?* Let not Dr. Criſp's book be looked upon as the ſtandard of our doctrine. There are many good things in it; and alſo many expreſſions in it that we generally diſlike. It is true, that Mr. Burgeſs and Mr. Rutherford wrote againſt Antinomianiſm, and againſt ſome that were both Antinomians and Arminians. And it is no leſs true, that they wrote againſt the Arminians, and did hate the new ſcheme of divinity, ſo much now contended for, and to which we owe all our preſent contentions. I am perſuaded, that if theſe godly and ſound divines were on the preſent ſtage, they would be as ready to draw their pens againſt two books lately printed againſt Dr Criſp, as ever they were to write againſt the Doctor's book. Truth is to be defended by truth; but error is often, and unhappily oppoſed by error under truth's name.

But what ſhall we do in this caſe? What ſhall we do for peace with our brethren? Shall we lie ſtill under their undeſerved reproaches; and, for keeping the peace, ſilently ſuffer others to beat us unjuſtly? If it were our own perſonal concern, we ſhould bear it: if it were only their charging us with ignorance, weakneſs and being unſtudied divines, (as they have uſed liberally to call all that have not learned, and dare not believe their new divinity), we might eaſily paſs it by, or put it up. But when we ſee the pure

goſpel

goſpel of Chriſt corrupted; and an Arminian goſpel new vampt, and obtruded on people, to the certain peril of the ſouls of ſuch as believe it; and our miniſtry reflected upon, which ſhould be dearer to us than our lives; can we be ſilent? As we have a charge from the Lord, to deliver to our people what we have received from him; ſo, as he calls and enables, we are not to *give place by ſubjection, not for an hour, to ſuch as creep in*, not only *to ſpy out*, but to deſtroy, not ſo much *the goſpel-liberty*, as the goſpel-ſalvation we have in Chriſt Jeſus, and to *bring us back under the yoke of legal bondage*. And indeed the caſe in that epiſtle to the Galatians and ours has a great affinity.

Is it deſired, that we ſhould forbear to make a free offer of God's grace in Chriſt to the worſt of ſinners? This cannot be granted by us: for this is the goſpel *faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation*, (and therefore worthy of all our preaching of it), *that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, and the chief of them*, 1 Tim i. 15. This was the apoſtolic practice, according to their Lord's command, Mark xvi. 15, 16, Luke xxiv. 47. They began at Jeruſalem, where the Lord of life was wickedly ſlain by them; and yet life in and through his blood was offered to, and accepted and obtained by many of them. Every believer's experience witneſſeth to this, that every one that believes on Jeſus Chriſt, acts that faith as the chief of ſinners. Every man that ſeeth himſelf rightly, thinks ſo of himſelf, and therein thinks not amiſs. God only knoweth who is truly the greateſt ſinner, and every humbled ſinner will think that he is the man.

Shall we tell men, that unleſs they be holy, they muſt not believe on Jeſus Chriſt? that they muſt not venture on Chriſt for ſalvation, till they be qualified and fit to be received and welcomed by him? This were to forbear preaching the goſpel at all, or to forbid all men to believe on Chriſt. For never was any ſinner qualified for Chriſt. He is well qualified

for

for us, 1 Cor. i. 30.; but a ſinner out of Chriſt hath no qualification for Chriſt but ſin and miſery. Whence ſhould we have any better, but in and from Chriſt? Nay, ſuppoſe an impoſſibility, that a man were qualified for Chriſt; I boldly aſſert, that ſuch a man would not, nor could ever believe on Chriſt. For faith is a loſt, helpleſs condemned ſinner's caſting himſelf on Chriſt for ſalvation; and the qualified man is no ſuch perſon.

Shall we warn people, that they ſhould not believe on Chriſt too ſoon? It is impoſſible that they ſhould do it too ſoon. Can a man obey the great *goſpel-command* too ſoon, 1 John iii. 23.? or do the great *work of God* too ſoon, John vi. 28, 29? A man may too ſoon think that he is in Chriſt; and that is when it is not ſo indeed: and this we frequently teach. But this is but an idle dream, and not faith. A man may too ſoon fancy that he hath faith; but, I hope, he cannot act faith too ſoon. If any ſhould ſay, a man may be holy too ſoon; how would that ſaying be reflected upon? And yet it is certain, that though no man can be too ſoon holy, (becauſe he cannot too ſoon believe on Chriſt, which is the only ſpring of true holineſs); yet he may, and many do, ſet about the ſtudy of that he counts holineſs too ſoon; that is, before *the tree be changed*, Matth. xii. 33, 34, 35; before he have *the new heart*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.; and the *Spirit of God dwelling in him*, which is only got by faith in Chriſt, Gal. iii. 14.; and therefore all this man's ſtudying of holineſs, is not only vain labour, but acting of ſin. And if this ſtudy, and theſe endeavours, be managed as commonly they are, to obtain juſtification before God, they are the more wicked works ſtill. And becauſe this point is needful to be known, I would give you ſome teſtimonies for it. Doctrine of the church of England, in her thirty-nine articles, *art.* 13. "Works done before the grace "of Chriſt, and the inſpiration of his Spirit, are not "pleaſant to God; foraſmuch as they ſpring not of "faith

" faith in Jeſus Chriſt: neither do they make men " meet to receive grace, or (as the ſchool-authors ſay) " deſerve grace of congruity. Yea, rather, for that " they are not done as God hath willed and command- " ed them to be done, we doubt not but they have " the nature of ſin." So *Confeſſion of Faith, chap.* 16. *art.* 7. *Calvin. Inſtit. lib.* 3. *cap.* 15. *ſect.* 6. " They " (ſaith he, ſpeaking of the popiſh ſchoolmen) have " found out I know not what moral good works, " whereby men are made acceptable to God before " they are ingrafted into Chriſt. As if the ſcripture " lyed, when it ſaid, *They are all in death who have* " *not the Son*, 1 John v. 12. If they be in death, " how can they beget matter of life? As if it were " of no force, *Whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin;* as if " *evil trees could bring forth good fruit.*" Read the reſt of that ſection. On the contrary, the council of Trent, *ſeſſ.* 6. *canon.* 7. ſay boldly, " Whoſoever " ſhall ſay, That all works done before juſtification, " howſoever they be done, are truly ſin, and deſerve " the hatred of God; let him be anathema." And to give you one more bellowing of the beaſt, wounded by the light of the goſpel, ſee the ſame *council, ſeſſ.* 6. *canon.* 11. *Si quis dixerit, Gratiam qua juſtificamur, eſſe tantum favorem Dei; anathema ſit.* This is fearful blaſphemy, ſaith Dr. Downham, biſhop of Londonderry, in his orthodox book of juſtification, *lib.* 3. *cap.* 1.; where he ſaith, " That the Hebrew words " which in the old teſtament ſignify *the grace of God*, " do always ſignify *favour*, and never *grace inherent*. " And above fifty teſtimonies may be brought from " the new teſtament, to prove that by *God's grace* " his *favour* is ſtill meant." But what was good church-of-England doctrine at and after the reformation, cannot now go down with ſome Arminianizing Nonconformiſts.

If then nothing will ſatisfy our quarrelling brethren, but either ſilence as to the main points of the goſpel, which we believe, and live by the faith of

and

and look to be ſaved in; which we have for many years preached, with ſome ſeals of the Holy Ghoſt in converting ſinners unto God, and in building them up in holineſs and comfort, by the faith and power of them; which alſo we vowed to the Lord to preach to all that will hear us, as long as we live, in the day when we gave up ourſelves to ſerve God with our ſpirit in the goſpel of his Son: if either this ſilence, or the ſwallowing down of Arminian ſchemes of the goſpel, contrary to the New Teſtament, and unknown to the reformed churches, in their greateſt purity, be the only terms of peace with our brethren; we muſt then maintain our peace with God, and our own conſciences, in the defence of plain goſpel-truth, and our harmony with the reformed churches: and in the comfort of theſe bear their enmity. And though it be uſual with them to vilify and contemn ſuch as differ from them, for their fewneſs, weakneſs, and want of learning; yet they might know, that the moſt learned and godly in the Chriſtian world, have maintained and defended the ſame doctrine we ſtand for, for ſome ages. The grace of God will never want, for it can, and will furniſh, defenders of it. England hath been bleſſed with a Bradwardine, an archbiſhop of Canterbury, againſt the Pelagians; a Twiſſe and Ames, againſt the Arminians. And though they that contend with us, would ſeparate their cauſe altogether from that of theſe two peſts of the church of Chriſt, I mean Pelagius and Arminius; yet judicious obſervers cannot but already perceive a coincidency; and do fear more, when either the force of argument ſhall drive them out of their lurking-holes, or when they ſhall think fit to diſcover their ſecret ſentiments, which yet we but gueſs at. Then, as we ſhall know better what they would be at; ſo it is very like, that they will then find enemies in many whom they have ſeduced by their craft, and do yet ſeem to be in their camp; and will meet with oppoſers, both at home and abroad, that they think not of.

Our doctrine of the juſtification of a ſinner by the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, however it be miſrepreſented and reflected upon, is yet undeniably recommended by four things.

1. It is a doctrine ſavoury and precious unto all ſerious godly perſons. Dr Ames's obſervation holds good as to all the Arminian divinity, that it is *contra communem ſenſun fidelium:* "againſt the common "ſenſe of believers." And though this be an argument of little weight with them that value more the judgment of the ſcribes, and the wiſe, and diſputers of this world, 1 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. than of all the godly; yet the Spirit of God by John gives us this ſame argument, 1 John iv. 5, 6. *They are of the world: therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the ſpirit of error.* How evident is it, that ſeveral who, by education, or an unſound miniſtry, having had their natural enmity againſt the grace of God ſtrengthened, when the Lord by his Spirit hath broke in upon their hearts, and hath raiſed a ſerious ſoul-exerciſe about their ſalvation; their turning to God in Chriſt, and their turning from Arminianiſm, have begun together? And ſome of the greateſt champions for the grace of God have been perſons thus dealt with; as we might inſtance. And as it is thus with men at their converſion; ſo it is found afterward, that ſtill as it is well with them in their inner man ſo doth the doctrine of grace ſtill appear more precious and ſavoury. On the other part, all the ungodly and unrenewed have a diſlike and diſreliſh of this doctrine; and are all for the doctrine of doing, and love to hear it; and, in their ſorry exerciſe, are ſtill for doing their own buſineſs in ſalvation; though they be nothing, but ſin, and deſtroy themſelves.

2. It is that doctrine only by which a convinced ſinner can be dealt with effectually. When a man is awak-

awakened, and brought to that, that all muſt be brought to, or to worſe, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* Acts xvi. 30, 31. we have the apoſtolic anſwer to it, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe.* This anſwer is ſo old, that with many it ſeems out of date. But it is ſtill, and will ever be freſh, and new, and ſavoury, and the only reſolution of this grand caſe of conſcience, as long as conſcience and the world laſts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or deviſe another or a better anſwer; nor can any but this alone heal rightly the wound of an awakened conſcience. Let us ſet this man to ſeek reſolution in this caſe of ſome maſters in our Iſrael. According to their principles they muſt ſay to him, "Repent, and mourn for your "known ſins, and leave them and lothe them; and "God will have mercy on you." "Alas! ſaith the "poor man, my heart is hard, and I cannot repent "aright; yea I find my heart more hard and vile "than when I was ſecure in ſin." If you ſpeak to this man of qualifications for Chriſt, he knows nothing of them; if of ſincere obedience, his anſwer is native and ready, "Obedience is the work of a living "man, and ſincerity is only in a renewed ſoul." Sincere obedience is therefore as impoſſible to a dead unrenewed ſinner, as perfect obedience is. Why ſhould not the right anſwer be given, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and you ſhall be ſaved?* Tell him what Chriſt is, what he hath done and ſuffered to obtain eternal redemption for ſinners, and that according to the will of God and his Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the goſpel-ſalvation wrought out by the Son of God; tell him the hiſtory and myſtery of the goſpel plainly. It may be the Holy Ghoſt will work faith thereby, as he did in thoſe firſt-fruits of the Gentiles, Acts x. 44. If he aſk, What warrant he hath to believe on Jeſus Chriſt? tell him, that he hath utter indiſpenſible neceſſity for it; for without believing on him, he muſt periſh eternally; that

he hath God's gracious offer of Chriſt and all his redemption; with a promiſe, that upon accepting the offer by faith, Chriſt and ſalvation with him is his: that he hath God's expreſs *commandment*, 1 John iii. 23. *to believe on Chriſt's name*; and that he ſhould make conſcience of obeying it, as well as any command in the moral law. Tell him of Chriſt's ability and good-will to ſave; that no man was ever rejected by him, that caſt himſelf upon him; that deſperate caſes are the glorious triumphs of his art of ſaving. Tell him, that there is no midſt between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuſe for neglecting the one, and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jeſus for ſalvation, is more pleaſing to God, than all obedience to his law; and that unbelief is the moſt provoking to God, and the moſt damning to man, of all ſins. Againſt the greatneſs of his ſins, the curſe of the law, and the ſeverity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held forth to him, but the free and boundleſs grace of God in the merit of Chriſt's ſatisfaction by the ſacrifice of himſelf. If he ſhould ſay, What is it to believe on Jeſus Chriſt: As to this, I find no ſuch queſtion in the word: but that all did ſome way underſtand the notion of it; the Jews that did not believe on him, John vi. 28, 29, 30.; the chief prieſts and Phariſees, John vii. 48; the blind man, John ix. 35. When Chriſt aſked him, *Believeſt thou on the Son of God?* he anſwered, *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?* Immediately, when Chriſt had told him, ver. 37. he ſaith not, *What is it to believe on him?* but, *Lord, I believe; and worſhipped him*: and ſo both profeſſed and acted faith in him. So the father of the lunatic, Mark ix. 23, 24.; the eunuch, Acts viii. 37. They all, both Chriſt's enemies and his diſciples, knew that faith in him was a believing, that the man Jeſus of Nazereth was the Son of God, the Meſſiah, and Saviour of the world, ſo as to receive, and look for ſalvation in his name, Acts iv. 12. This was the common report, publiſhed by Chriſt,

Chriſt, and his apoſtles and diſciples; and known by all that heard it. If he yet aſk, What he is to believe? you tell him, that he is not called to believe, that he is in Chriſt, and that his ſins are pardoned, and he is a juſtified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Chriſt, 1 John v. 10, 11, 12.; and *this record is, that God giveth* (that is, offereth) *to us eternal life in his Son Jeſus Chriſt;* and that all that with the heart believe this report, and reſt their ſouls on theſe glad tidings, ſhall be ſaved, Rom. x. 9, 10, 11. And thus he is to *believe, that he may be juſtified*, Gal. ii. 16. If he ſtill ſay, That this believing is hard, this is a good doubt, but eaſily reſolved. It beſpeaks a man deeply humbled. Any body may ſee his own impotence to obey the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of believing. For his reſolution, aſk him, What it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingneſs to be juſtified and ſaved? Is it unwillingneſs to be ſo ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt, to the praiſe of God's grace in him, and to the voiding of all boaſting in himſelf? This he will ſurely deny. Is it a diſtruſt of the truth of the goſpel-record? This he dares not own. Is it a doubt of Chriſt's ability, or good-will to ſave? This is to contradict the teſtimony of God in the goſpel. It it becauſe he doubts of an intereſt in Chriſt and his redemption? You tell him, that believing on Chriſt makes up the intereſt in him. If he ſay, That he cannot believe on Jeſus Chriſt, becauſe of the difficulty of the acting this faith; and that a divine power is needful to draw it forth, which he finds not; you tell him, that believing in Jeſus Chriſt is no work, but a reſting on Jeſus Chriſt; and that this pretence is as unreaſonable, as that if a man wearied with a journey, and who is not able to go one ſtep further, ſhould argue, "I am ſo tired, that I am not able to "lie down;" when indeed he can neither ſtand nor go. The poor wearied ſinner can never believe on Jeſus Chriſt, till he finds he can do nothing for himſelf;

ſelf; and in his firſt believing doth always apply himſelf to Chriſt for ſalvation, as a man hopeleſs and helpleſs in himſelf. And by ſuch reaſonings with him from the goſpel, the Lord will (as he hath often done) convey faith, and joy and peace by believing.

3. This doctrine of free juſtification by faith alone, hath this advantage, That it ſuits all men's ſpirits and frame in their ſerious approaches to God in worſhip. Men may think and talk boldly of inherent righteouſneſs, and of its worth and value; of good works, and frames, and diſpoſitions: but when men preſent themſelves before the Lord, and have any diſcoveries of his glory, all things in themſelves will diſappear, and be looked upon as nothing. Zophar, though the hotteſt ſpeaker of Job's friends, did yet ſpeak rightly to him, Job xi. 4, 5. *For thou haſt ſaid, my doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But, O that God would ſpeak!* And ſo Job found it, when God diſplayed his glory to him, and that only in the works of creation and providence, chap. xxxviii, xxxix. He then changed his note, Job xli. 4, 5, and xlii. 2,—6. So was it with Iſaiah, chap. vi. 5. till pardoning grace was imparted to him. No man can ſtand before this holy Lord God, with any peace and comfort, unleſs he have God himſelf to ſtay upon. His grace and mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, can only preſerve a man from being conſumed; and the faith of it from being confounded. Hence we ſee the difference betwixt mens frame in their diſputes and doctrine about theſe points, and their own ſenſe and pleadings with God in prayer.

4. This doctrine of juſtification by faith without any mixtures of man, (however, and by what names and titles ſoever they be dignified or diſtinguiſhed), hath this undoubted advantage, That it is that which all not judicially hardened and blinded, do, or would, or muſt betake themſelves unto, when dying. How loth would men be to plead that cauſe on a death-

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bed, which they ſo ſtoutly ſtand up for with tongue and pen, when at eaſe, and that evil day far away? They ſeem to be jealous, leſt God's grace and Chriſt's righteouſneſs have too much room, and mens works too little, in the buſineſs of juſtification. But was there ever a ſenſible dying perſon exerciſed with this jealouſy as to himſelf? Even bloody Stephen Gardiner, when a-dying, could anſwer Dr Day, Biſhop of Chicheſter, who offered comfort to him by this doctrine, "What, my Lord, will you open that gap "now? Then farewel altogether. To me, and ſuch "other in my caſe, you may ſpeak it; but open this "window to the people, then farewel altogether." *Book of martyrs, vol.* 3. *p.* 450. In which words, he bewrayed a conviction of the fitneſs of the doctrine to dying perſons, and his knowledge that it tended to the deſtroying the kingdom of Antichriſt. As Fox, in the ſame *Book of martyrs, vol.* 2. *p.* 46. gives this as the reaſon of Luther's ſucceſs againſt Popery, above all former attempts of preceeding witneſſes. "But "(ſaith he) Luther gave the ſtroke, and plucked "down the foundation, and all by opening one vein, "long hid before, wherein lieth the touchſtone of "all truth and doctrine, as the only principal origin "of our ſalvation; which is, our free juſtification by "faith only, in Chriſt the Son of God." Conſider how it is with the moſt holy and eminent ſaints when dying. Did ye ever ſee or hear any boaſting of their works and performances? They may, and do own, to the praiſe of his grace, what they have been made to be, what they have been helped to do or ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake. But when they draw near to the awful tribunal, what elſe is in their eye and heart, but only free grace, ranſoming blood, and a well-ordered covenant in Chriſt the Surety? They cannot bear to hear any make mention to them of their holineſs, their own grace and attainments. In a word, the doctrine of conditions, qualifications, and rectoral government, and the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments

niſhments, according to the new law of grace, will make but an eaſy bed to a dying man's conſcience; and will leave him in a very bad condition at preſent, and in dread of worſe, when he is feeling, in his laſt agonies, that *the wages of ſin is death*, if he cannot by faith add, *But the gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. He is a wiſe and happy man that anchors his ſoul on that rock, at which he can ride out the ſtorm of death. Why ſhould men contend for that in their life, that they know they muſt renounce at their death? or neglect that truth now, that they muſt betake themſelves unto then? Why ſhould a man build a houſe, which he muſt leave in a ſtorm, or be buried in its ruins? Many architects have attempted to make a ſure houſe of their own righteouſneſs: but it is without a foundation; and muſt fall, or be thrown down forrowfully by the fooliſh builder; which is the better way. It is a great teſt of the truth of the doctrine about the way of ſalvation, when it is generally approved of by ſenſible dying men. And what the univerſal ſenſe of all ſuch in this caſe is, as to the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and their own is obvious to any man. He was an ingenuous Balaamite, who being himſelf a Papiſt, ſaid to a Proteſtant, "Our religion is beſt to live in, and "your's beſt to die in."

But notwithſtanding of theſe great advantages (and they are but a few of many) that this doctrine is attended with, there are not a few diſadvantages it labours under; which though they are rather to its commendation than reproach, yet they do hinder its welcome and reception. As,

1. This doctrine is a ſpiritual myſtery, and lieth not level to a natural underſtanding, 1 Cor. ii. 10. 14. Working for life, a man naturally underſtands: but believing for life, he underſtands not. To mend the old man, he knows; but to put on the new man by faith, is a riddle to him. The ſtudy of holineſs, and to endeavour to ſquare his life according to God's law, he

he knows a little of, though he can never do it; but to draw ſanctification from Chriſt by faith, and to walk holily, in and through the force of the Spirit of Chriſt in the heart by faith, is mere canting to him. A new life he underſtands a little; but nothing of a new birth and regeneration. He never ſaw himſelf ſtark dead. Nay, not only it is unknown to the natural man, but he is by his natural ſtate an enemy to it. He neither doth, nor can know it, nor approve of it, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *Wiſdom* (that is, Chriſt's way of ſaving men revealed in the goſpel) *is juſtified of all her children*, and of them only, Matth. xi. 19. Luke vii. 29, 30, 35. This enmity in men to the wiſdom of God, is the cauſe not only of this contempt of its miniſtry, but is a temptation to many miniſters to patch up and frame a goſpel that is more ſuited to, and taking with, and more eaſily underſtood by ſuch men, than the true goſpel of Chriſt is. This Paul complains of in others, and vindicates himſelf from, 1 Cor. i. 17. and ii. 2. He warns others againſt it, Col. ii. 8. 2 Cor. xi. 3. 4. Gal. i. 6, 7, 8, 9. And it is certain, that doing for life is more ſuited to corrupt nature, than believing is.

2. Our oppoſers in this doctrine have the many for them, and againſt us; as they of old boaſted, John vii. 48. This they have no ground to glory in, tho' they do; nor we to be aſhamed of the truth, becauſe we cannot vie numbers with them. With our oppoſers are all theſe ſorts, (and they make a great number); though I do not ſay or think, that all our oppoſers are to be ranked in any of theſe liſts; for ſome both godly and learned may miſtake us, and the truth, in this matter. 1. They have all the ignorant people, that know nothing of either law or goſpel. They ſerve God, (they ſay, but moſt falſely); and hope that God will be merciful to them, and ſave them. To all ſuch, both the clear explication of God's law, and the myſteries of the goſpel, are ſtrange things. Yet ſincere obedience they love to hear of; for all of

them think there is ſome ſincerity in their hearts, and that they can do ſomewhat. But of faith in Chriſt they have no knowledge; except by faith you underſtand a dream of being ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt, though they know nothing of him, or of his way of ſaving men, nor of the way of being ſaved by him. 2. All formaliſts are on their ſide; people that place their religion in trifles, becauſe they are ſtrangers to the ſubſtance thereof. 3. All proud ſecure ſinners are againſt us, that *go about*, with the Jews, *to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs*, Rom. x. 3. The ſecure are whole, and ſee no need of the phyſician; the proud have phyſic at home, and deſpiſe that that came down from heaven. 4. All the zealous devout people in a natural religion, are utter enemies to the goſpel. By a natural religion, I mean that that is the product of the remnants of God's image in fallen man, a little improved by the light of God's word. All ſuch cannot endure to hear, that God's law muſt be perfectly fulfilled in every title of it, or no man can be ſaved by doing; that they muſt all periſh for ever, that have not the righteouſneſs of a man that never ſinned, who is alſo God over all bleſſed for ever, to ſhelter and cover them from a holy God's anger, and to render them accepted of him: that this righteouſneſs is put on by the grace of God, and a man muſt betake himſelf to it, and receive it as a naked bluſhing ſinner: that no man can do any thing that is good, till goſpel-grace renew him, and make him firſt a good man. This they will never receive, but do ſtill think that a man may grow good by doing good.

3. Natural reaſon is very fertile in its objections and cavils againſt the doctrine of the grace of God; and eſpecially when this corrupt reaſon is poliſhed by learning and ſtrong natural parts. When there are many to broach ſuch doctrine, and many ſo diſpoſed to receive it, is it any wonder that the goſpel-truth makes little progreſs in the world? Nay, were it not for the divine power that ſupports it, and the promiſ-

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es of its preſervation, its enemies are ſo many and ſtrong, and true friends ſo few and feeble, we might fear its periſhing from the earth. But we know it is impoſſible. And if the Lord have a deſign of mercy to theſe nations, and hath a vein of his election to dig up amongſt us, we make no doubt, but the glory of Chriſt, as a crucified Saviour, ſhall yet be diſplayed in the midſt of us, to the joy of all that love his ſalvation, and to the ſhame of others, Iſa. lxvi. 5.

4. I might add the great declenſion of ſome of the reformed churches from the purity and ſimplicity of that doctrine they were firſt planted in. The new Methodiſts about the grace of God, had too great an increaſe in the French churches. And, which was very ſtrange, this declenſion advanced amongſt them, at the ſame time when Janſeniſm was ſpreading amongſt many of the church of Rome: ſo that a man might have ſeen Papiſts growing better in their doctrine, and Proteſtants growing worſe. See Mr. Gale's *Idea of Janſeniſm*, with Dr. Owen's preface. What there is of this amongſt us in England, I leave the reader to Mr. Jenkyn's *Celeuſma*, and to the *Naked truth, part* 4. And if there be any warping toward Arminian doctrine by ſome on our ſide, in order to ingratiate themſelves with that church that hath the ſecular advantages to diſpenſe, and to make way for ſome accommodation with them, I had rather wait in fear till a further diſcovery of it, than offer to gueſs at.

5. Laſtly, It is no ſmall diſadvantage this doctrine lies under from the ſpirit of this day we live in. A light, frothy, trifling temple, prevails generally; doctrines of the greateſt weight are talked of and treated about, with a vain unconcerned frame of ſpirit; as if men contended rather about opinions and ſchool-points, than about the oracles of God, and matters of faith. But, if mens hearts were ſeen by themſelves; if ſin were felt; if mens conſciences were enlivened; if God's holy law were known in its exactneſs and

ſeverity, and the glory and majeſty of the lawgiver ſhining before mens eyes; if men were living as leaving time, and launching forth into eternity; the goſpel-ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt would be more regarded.

Object. 1. Is there not a great decay amongſt profeſſors in real practical godlineſs? Are we like the old Proteſtants, or the old Puritans? I anſwer, That the decay and degeneracy is great, and heavily to be bewailed. But what is the cauſe? and what will be its cure? Is it becauſe the doctrine of morality, and virtue, and good works, is not enough preached? This cannot be: for there hath been for many years a public miniſtry in the nation, that make theſe their conſtant themes. Yet the land is become as Sodom for all lewdneſs; and the tree of profaneneſs is ſo grown, that the ſword of the magiſtrate hath not yet been able to lop off any of its branches. Is it becauſe men have too much faith in Chriſt? or too little? or none at all? Would not faith in Chriſt increaſe holineſs? did it not always ſo? and will it not ſtill do it? Was not the holineſs of the firſt Proteſtants eminent and ſhining? and yet they generally put aſſurance in the definition of their faith. We cannot ſay, that goſpel-holineſs hath proſpered much by the correction or mitigation of that harſh-like definition. The certain ſpring of this prevailing wickedneſs in the land, is people's ignorance and unbelief of the goſpel of Chriſt; and that grows by many prophets that ſpeak lyes to them in the name of the Lord.

Object. 2. But do not ſome abuſe the grace of the goſpel, and turn it into wantonneſs? *Anſwer.* Yes; ſome do, ever did, and ſtill will do ſo. But it is only the ill-underſtood and not believed doctrine of grace that they abuſe. The grace itſelf no man can abuſe; for its power prevents its abuſe. Let us ſee how Paul, that bleſſed herald of this grace, (as he was an eminent inſtance of it), dealeth with this objection, Rom. vi. 1. *&c.* What doth he to prevent this abuſe? Is it by extenuating what he had ſaid,

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chap. v. 20. that *grace abounds much more, where ſin had abounded?* Is it by mincing grace ſmaller, that men may not choke upon it, or ſurfeit by it? Is it by mixing ſomething of the law with it, to make it more wholſome? No: but only by plain aſſerting the power and influence of this grace, where-ever it really is; as at length in that chapter. This grace is all treaſured up in Chriſt Jeſus, offered to all men in the goſpel, poured forth by our Lord in the working of faith, and drunk in by the elect in the exerciſe of faith; and becomes in them a living ſpring, which will, and muſt break out and ſpring up in all holy converſation. He exhorts them to drink in more and more of this grace by faith. And as for ſuch as pretend to grace, and live ungodly, the Spirit of God declares, they are void of grace, which is always fruitful in good works, 2 Pet. ii. and Jude's epiſtle. The apoſtle orders the churches to caſt ſuch out, 1 Cor. v. 2 Tim. iii. 5.; and to declare to them, as Peter did to a profeſſor, Acts viii. 20, 21. that *they have no part nor portion in this matter, for their heart is not right in the ſight of God;* though the doctrine be right, that they hypocritically profeſs.

But if our brethren will not forbear their charge of Antinomianiſm, we intreat them that they will give it in juſtly. As. 1. On them that ſay, that the ſanction of the holy law of God is repealed; ſo that no man is now under it, either to be condemned for breaking it, or to be ſaved by keeping it; which to us is rank Antinomianiſm and Arminianiſm both: yea that it doth not now require perfect holineſs. But indeed what can it require? for it is no law, if its ſanction be repealed. 2. On them let the charge lie, that are ungodly under the name of Chriſtianity. And both they and we know where to find ſuch true Antinomians in great abundance, who yet are never called by that name. And is it not ſomewhat ſtrange, that men who have ſo much zeal againſt an Antinomian principle, have ſo much kindneſs for true Antinomians in practice?

practice? 3. Let him be called by this ugly name, that judgeth not the holy law and word of God written in the old and new teſtament to be a perfect rule of life to all believers, and ſaith not that all ſuch ſhould ſtudy conformity thereunto, Rom. xii. 2. 4. That encourageth himſelf in ſin, and hardeneth himſelf in impenitence, by the doctrine of the goſpel. No man that knows and believes the goſpel, can do ſo. What ſome hypocrites may do, is nothing to us, who diſown all ſuch perſons and practices: and own no principle that can really encourage the one, or influence the other. 5. That thinketh holineſs is not neceſſary to all that would be ſaved. We maintain, not only that it is neceſſary to, but that it is a great part of ſalvation. 6. Whoever thinks, that when a believer comes ſhort in obeying God's law, he ſins not; and that he ought not to mourn becauſe of it as provoking to God, and hurtful to the new creation in him; and that he needs not renew the exerciſe of faith and repentance for repeated waſhing and pardoning. Laſtly, That ſay, that a ſinner is actually juſtified before he be united to Chriſt by faith. It is ſtrange, that ſuch that are charged with this, of all men do moſt preſs on ſinners to believe on Jeſus Chriſt, and urge the damnation threatened in the goſpel upon all unbelievers. That there is a decreed juſtification from eternity, particular and fixed as to all the elect, and a virtual perfect juſtification of all the redeemed, in and by the death and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, Iſa. liii. 11. Rom. iv. 25. Heb. ix. 26, 28. and x. 14. is not yet called in queſtion by any amongſt us; and more is not craved, but that a ſinner, for his actual juſtification, muſt lay hold on and plead this redemption in Chriſt's blood by faith.

But, on the other hand, we glory in any name of reproach (as the honourable reproach of Chriſt) that is caſt upon us for aſſerting the abſolute boundleſs freedom of the grace of God, which excludes all merit, and every thing like it; the abſoluteneſs of the covenant

nant of grace, (for the covenant of redemption was plainly and ſtrictly a conditional one, and the nobleſt of all conditions was in it. The Son of God's taking on him man's nature, and offering it in ſacrifice, was the ſtrict condition of all the glory and reward promiſed to Chriſt and his ſeed, Iſa. liii. 10, 11.), wherein all things are freely promiſed, and that faith that is required for ſealing a man's intereſt in the covenant is promiſed in it, and wrought by the grace of it, Eph. ii 8. That faith at firſt is wrought by, and acts upon a full and abſolute offer of Chriſt, and of all his fulneſs; an offer that hath no condition in it, but that native one to all offers acceptance; and in the very act of this acceptance, the accepter doth expreſly diſclaim all things in himſelf, but ſinfulneſs and miſery. That faith in Jeſus Chriſt doth juſtify (although by the way it is to be noted, that it is never written in the word, that faith juſtifieth actively, but always paſſively: that a man is juſtified by faith, and that God juſtifieth men by, and through faith; yet admitting the phraſe) only as a mere inſtrument receiving that imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for which we are juſtified; and that this faith, in the office of juſtification, is neither condition nor qualification, nor our goſpel-righteouſneſs, but in its very act a renouncing of all ſuch pretences.

We proclaim the market of grace to be free, Iſa. iv. 1, 2, 3. It is Chriſt's laſt offer and loweſt, Rev. xxii. 17. If there be any price or money ſpoke of, it is *no price, no money.* And where ſuch are the terms and conditions, if we be forced to call them ſo, we muſt ſay, that they look liker a renouncing, than a boaſting of any qualifications or conditions. Surely the terms of the goſpel-bargain are, God's free giving and our free taking and receiving.

We are not aſhamed of teaching the ineffectualneſs of the law, and all the works of it, to give life; either that of juſtification, or of regeneration and ſanctification, or of eternal life: That the law of God can

can only damn all ſinners; that it only rebukes, and thereby irritates and increaſes ſin; and can never ſubdue it, till goſpel-grace come with power upon the heart; and then when the law is written in the heart, it is copied out in the life.

That we call men to believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in that caſe the firſt Adam brought them to, and left them in; in that caſe that the law finds and leaves them in, guilty, filthy, condemned: out of which caſe they can only be delivered by Chriſt, and by believing on him.

That we tell ſinners, that Jeſus Chriſt will ſurely welcome all that come to him; and as he will not caſt them out for their ſinfulneſs, in their nature and by-paſt life, ſo neither for their miſery, in the want of ſuch qualifications and graces that he only can give.

That we do hold forth the propitiation in Chriſt's blood, as the only thing to be in the eye of a man that would believe on Chriſt unto juſtification of life; and that by this faith alone a ſinner is juſtified, and God is juſtified in doing ſo.

That *God juſtifieth the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. neither by making him godly before he juſtify him, nor leaving him ungodly after he hath juſtified him; but that the ſame grace that juſtifies him, doth immediately ſanctify him.

If for ſuch doctrine we be called *Antinomians*, we are bold to ſay, that there is ſome ignorance of, or prejudice at the known Proteſtant doctrine, in the hearts of the reproachers.

That there are ſome things we complain of. As,

1. That they load their brethren ſo grievouſly with unjuſt calumnies, either directly, or by conſequence: as when they preach up holineſs, and the neceſſity of it, as if it were their proper doctrine, and diſowned by us; when they cannot but know in their conſciences, that there is no difference between them and us, about the nature and neceſſity of holineſs, but only

only about its ſpring and place in ſalvation. We derive it from Jeſus Chriſt, and faith in him; and know aſſuredly, that it can ſpring from nothing elſe. We place it betwixt juſtification and glory, and that is its ſcripture-place; and no where elſe can it be found or ſtand, let them try it as much and as long as they will.

2. That they ſeem very zealous againſt Antinomianiſm, and forget the other extreme of Arminianiſm; which is far more common, as dangerous, and far more natural to all men. For though there have been, and may be this day, ſome true Antinomians, either through ignorance, or weakneſs, reeling to that extreme, or by the heat of contention with, and hatred of Arminianiſm, (as it is certain, ſome very good and learned men have inclined to Arminianiſm, through their hatred of Antinomianiſm, and have declared ſo much): and ſome may, and do corrupt the doctrine of the goſpel, through the unrenewedneſs of their hearts: yet how deſtructive ſoever this abuſe may be to the ſouls of the ſeduced, ſuch an appearance of Antinomianiſm is but a meteor or comet, that will ſoon blaze out, and its folly will be quickly hiſſed off the ſtage. But the principles of Arminianiſm are the natural dictates of a carnal mind, which is enmity both to the law of God, and to the goſpel of Chriſt; and, next to the dead ſea of Popery, (into which alſo this ſtream runs), have, ſince Pelagius to this day, been the greateſt plague of the church of Chriſt, and it is like will be till his ſecond coming.

3. We do alſo juſtly complain, that, in their oppoſing of true Antinomian errors, and particularly the alledged tenets of Dr. Criſp, they hint that there is a party of miniſters and profeſſors that defend them; whereas we can defy them to name one miniſter in London at leaſt, that doth ſo.

4. That expreſſions capable of a good ſenſe, are ſtrenuouſly perverted, contrary to the ſcope of the writer or ſpeaker. But this and ſuch like are the u-

ſual methods of unfair contenders. Were the like methods taken on the other ſide, how many, Popiſh, Arminian, yea and Socinian expreſſions, might be publiſhed? If any goſpel-truth be preached or publiſhed, that reflects on the idol of ſelf-righteouſneſs, and juſtification thereby, it is ſoon quarrelled with. But reproaches caſt on the free grace of God, and the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, are with them, if not approved, yet but venial, well-meant miſtakes. Let mens ſtated principles be known, and their expreſſions explained accordingly, or miſtakes and contentions will be endleſs.

5. We do alſo complain, that love to peace hath made many grave and ſound divines forbear to utter their minds freely in public on theſe points: whereby the adverſe party is emboldened; and ſuch miniſters as dare not purchaſe peace by ſilence, when ſo great truths are undermined, are expoſed as a mark. But we do not queſtion but theſe worthy brethren, when they ſhall ſee the points of controverſy accurately ſtated (as they may ſhortly), will openly appear on truth's ſide, as we know their hearts are for it.

6. *Laſtly*, We complain, that the ſcheme of the goſpel contended for by oppoſers, is clouded, vailed, and darkened by ſchool terms; new, uncouth, and unſcriptural phraſes; whereby as they think to guard themſelves againſt oppoſition, ſo they do increaſe the jealouſies of their brethren, and keep their principles from the knowledge of ordinary people, who are as much concerned in thoſe points as any ſcholar or divine.

This controverſy looks like a very bad omen. We thought we might have healed our old breaches, in ſmaller things; and, behold, a new one is threatened in the greateſt matters. We did hope, that the good old Proteſtant doctrine had been rooted and rivetted in the hearts of all the miniſters on our ſide; but now we find the contrary, and that the ſour leaven of Arminianiſm

minianism works strongly. Their advocates do not yet own the name; but the younger sort are more bold and free: and with them no books or authors are in esteem and use, but such as are for the new rational method of divinity. (Rational is a fitter commendation of a philosopher, than of a divine: and yet it is somewhat better applied to a divine, than to divinity; for true divinity hath a higher and nobler original than man's reason, even divine revelation; and it can never be rightly learned by them that have no higher principle in them than reason, even the teaching of the Holy Ghost). But for Luther, Calvin, Zanchy, Twisse, Ames, Perkins, and divines of their spirit and stamp, they are generally neglected and despised.

We were in hope, that after the Lord had so signally appeared for his truth and people, in preserving both, under the rage of that Antichristian spirit of persecution, and apostasy to gross Popery, that wrought so mightily under the two last reigns, and when he had given us the long-desired mercy of a legal establishment of our gospel-liberty in this, that all hearts and hands should have been unanimously employed in the advancing of the work of Christ. But we find, that as we have for a long time lost, in a great measure, the power, we are now in no small danger of losing also the purity of the gospel. And without them what signifies liberty!

It is undoubted, that the devil designs the obstructing of the course of the gospel; and in this he hath often had the service of the tongues and pens of good men, as well as of bad. Yet we are not without hope, that the Lord, in his wisdom and mercy, will defeat him; and that these contentions may yet have good fruit and a good issue.

For furthering of this good end, let me request a few things of my brethren.

1. Let us not receive reports suddenly of one another. In times of contention, many false reports are

raiſed, and raſhly believed. This is both the fruit and the fuel of contention. For all the noiſe of Antinomianiſm, I muſt declare, that I do not know (and I have both opportunity and inclination to inquire) any one Antinomian miniſter or Chriſtian in London, who is really ſuch as their reproachers paint them out or ſuch as Luther and Calvin wrote againſt.

2. Let us make Chriſt crucified our great ſtudy, as Chriſtians; and the preaching of him our main work, as miniſters. 1 Cor. ii. 2. Paul determined to know nothing elſe. But many manage the miniſtry, as if they had taken up a contrary determination, even to know any thing, *ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* We are amazed to ſee ſo many aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt, and to behave as if they accounted the tidings of ſalvation by the ſlain Son of God, an old antiquated ſtory, and unfit to be daily preached. And what comes in the room thereof, is not unknown, nor is it worth the mentioning. For all things that come in Chriſt's room, and juſtle him out, either of hearts or pulpits, are alike abominable to a Chriſtian. How many ſermons may a man hear, and read when printed, yea, and books written, about the way to heaven, wherein is hardly the name of Jeſus Chriſt? And if he be named, it is the name of Chriſt as a Judge and Lawgiver, rather than that of a Saviour. And as little room hath Chriſt in many mens prayers; except it be in the concluſion. When we cannot avoid the obſerving of thoſe ſad things, let it be a ſharp ſpur to us, to preach Chriſt more, to pray more in his name and to live more to his praiſe. Let us not be deceived with that pretence, That Chriſt may be preached, when he is not named. The preaching of the goſpel is the naming of Chriſt, and ſo called, Rom. xv. 20. And Paul was to *bear Chriſt's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Iſrael,* Acts ix. 15.

3. Let us ſtudy hard, and pray much, to know the truth, and to cleave unto it. It is an old obſervation, *Ante Pelagium ſecurius loquebantur patres:* "Be-

"fore

"fore Pelagius even the fathers ſpoke more care-
"leſsly;" meaning well, and fearing no miſtakes in their hearers. Now is it not ſo; the more careful ſhould we be in our doctrine. Let us ſearch our own conſciences, and ſee how we ourſelves are juſtified before God. So Paul argued, Gal. ii. 15, 16. And let us bring forth that doctrine to our people, that we find in our bibles, and have felt the power of upon our own hearts.

4. Let us not run into extremes, upon the right or left hand, through the heat of contention; but carefully keep the good old way of the Proteſtant doctrine, wherein ſo many thouſands of ſaints and martyrs of Jeſus have lived holily, and died happily, who never heard of our new ſchemes and notions.

And, for this end, let us take and cleave to the teſt of the Aſſembly's Confeſſion of Faith and Catechiſms. More we own not ourſelves, more we crave not of our brethren: and becauſe we deal fairly and openly, I ſhall ſet it down *verbatim*. *Conf. chap.* 11. *Of juſtification. Art.* 1. "Thoſe whom God effectually cal-
"leth, he alſo freely juſtifieth: not by infuſing righ-
"teouſneſs into them, but by pardoning their ſins,
"and by accounting and accepting their perſons as
"righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or
"done by them, but for Chriſt's ſake alone; not by
"imputing faith itſelf, the act of believing, or any
"other evangelical obedience, to them, as their righ-
"teouſneſs; but by imputing the obedience and ſatiſ-
"faction of Chriſt unto them, they receiving, and reſt-
"ing on him and his righteouſneſs by faith; which faith
"they have, not of themſelves, it is the gift of God."

Art. 2. "Faith, thus receiving and reſting on Chriſt
"and his righteouſneſs, is the alone inſtrument of
"juſtification. Yet it is not alone in the perſon juſti-
"fied, but is ever accompanied with all other ſaving
"graces; and is no dead faith, but worketh by love."

Art. 3. "Chriſt, by his obedience and death, did
"fully diſcharge the debt of all thoſe that are thus

"juſ-

" juſtified, and did make a proper, real, and full ſa-
" tisfaction to his Father's juſtice in their behalf. Yet,
" in as much as he was given by the Father for them,
" and his obedience and ſatisfaction accepted in their
" ſtead, and both freely, not for any thing in them,
" their juſtification is only of free grace; that both
" the exact juſtice, and rich grace of God, might be
" glorified in the juſtification of ſinners."

Art. 4. " God did, from all eternity, decree to juſ-
" tify all the elect; and Chriſt did, in the fulneſs of
" time, die for their ſins, and riſe again for their juſ-
" tification: nevertheleſs they are not juſtified, until
" the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply
" Chriſt unto them."

Art. 5. " God doth continue to forgive the ſins of
" thoſe that are juſtified. And although they can ne-
" ver fall from the ſtate of juſtification; yet they may
" by their ſins, fall under God's fatherly diſpleaſure;
" and not have the light of his countenance reſtored
" unto them, until they humble themſelves, confeſs
" their ſins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and
" repentance."

Art. 6. "The juſtification of believers under the old
" teſtament was, in all theſe reſpects, one and the ſame
" with the juſtification of believers under the new teſ-
" tament." This is the whole chapter exactly.

Larger Catechiſm. *Q.* " How doth faith juſtify a
" ſinner in the ſight of God? *Anſw.* Faith juſtifies a
" ſinner in the ſight of God, not becauſe of thoſe o-
" ther graces which do always accompany it; or of
" good works, that are the fruits of it; nor as if the
" grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to
" him for his juſtification; but only as it is an inſtru-
" ment, by which he receiveth and applieth Chriſt
" and his righteouſneſs."

Let theſe weighty words be but heartily aſſented to in their plain and native ſenſe, and we are one in this great point of juſtification. But can any conſidering man think, that the new ſcheme of a real change, repentance,

pentance, and ſincere obedience, as neceſſary to be found in a perſon that may lawfully come to Chriſt for juſtification; of faith's juſtifying as it is the ſpring of ſincere obedience; of a man's being juſtified by, and upon his coming up to the terms of the new law of grace, (a new word, but of an old and ill meaning:) can any man think, that this ſcheme, and the ſound words of the Reverend Aſſembly, do agree? Surely, if ſuch a ſcheme had been offered to that grave, learned, and orthodox ſynod, it would have had a more ſevere cenſure paſſed upon it, than I am willing to name.

Do not we find, in our particular dealings with ſouls, the ſame principles I am now oppoſing?

When we deal with the carnal, ſecure, careleſs ſinners, (and they are a vaſt multitude), and aſk them a reaſon of that hope of heaven they pretend to, is not this their common anſwer: "I live innoffenſively; "I keep God's law as well as I can; and wherein I "fail, I repent, and beg God's mercy for Chriſt's "ſake. My heart is ſincere, though my knowledge "and attainments be ſhort of others? If we go on "to inquire further, What acquaintance they have "with Jeſus Chriſt? what applications their ſouls have "made to him? what workings of faith on him? "what uſe they have made of his righteouſneſs for "juſtification, and his ſpirit for ſanctification? what "they know of living by faith in Jeſus Chriſt?" we are barbarians to them. And in this ſad ſtate many thouſands in England, live, and die, and periſh eternally. Yet ſo thick is the darkneſs of the age, that many of them live here, and go hence, with the reputation of good Chriſtians: and ſome of them may have their funeral ſermon and praiſes preached by an ignorant flattering miniſter; though it may be the poor creatures never did, in the whol courſe of their life, nor at their death, employ Jeſus Chriſt ſo much for an entry to heaven, purchaſed by his blood, and only acceſſible by faith in him, as a poor Turk doth Maho-

Mahomet, for a room in his beaſtly paradiſe. How common and fearful a thing is this in this land and city!

When we come to deal with a poor awakened ſinner, who ſeeth his loſt ſtate, and that he is condemned by the law of God; we find the ſame principles working in him: for they are natural, and therefore univerſal in all men, and hardly rooted out of any. We find him ſick and wounded: we tell him where his help lies, in Jeſus Chriſt; what his proper work is, to apply to him by faith. What is his anſwer? "Alas! ſaith the man, I have been and I am ſo vile "a ſinner, my heart is ſo bad, and ſo full of plagues "and corruptions, that I cannot think of believing on "Chriſt. But if I had but repentance, and ſome ho-"lineſs in heart and life, and ſuch gracious qualifica-"tions, I would then believe:" when indeed this his anſwer is as full of nonſenſe, ignorance, and pride, as words can contain or expreſs. They imply, 1. "If I "were pretty well recovered, I would employ the Phy-"ſician, Chriſt. 2. That there is ſome hope to work "out theſe good things by myſelf, without Chriſt. 3. "And when I come to Chriſt with a price in my "hand, I ſhall be welcome. 4. That I can come "to Chriſt when I will." So ignorant are people naturally of faith in Jeſus Chriſt; and no words or warnings repeated, nor plaineſt inſtructions, can beat into mens heads and hearts, that the firſt coming to Chriſt by faith or believing on him, is not a believing we ſhall be ſaved by him; but a believing on him, that we may be ſaved by him. And it is leſs to be wondered at, that ignorant people do not, when ſo many learned men will not underſtand it.

When we deal with a proud, ſelf-righteous hypocrite, we find the ſame principles of enmity againſt the grace of the goſpel. A profane perſon is not ſo enraged at the rebukes of ſin from the law, as theſe Phariſees are at the diſcovery of their ruin by unbelief. They cannot endure to have their idol of ſelf-righteouſneſs touched; neither by the ſpirituality of God's

God's law, that condemns all men, and all their works, while out of Chriſt; nor by the goſpel, which reveals another righteouſneſs than their own, by which they muſt be ſaved: but they will have God's ark of the covenant to ſtand as a captive in the temple of their Dagon of ſelf-righteouſneſs, until the vengeance of God's deſpiſed covenant overthrow both the temple, and idol, and worſhippers.

There is not a miniſter that dealeth ſeriouſly with the ſouls of men, but he finds an Arminian ſcheme of juſtification in every unrenewed heart. And is it not ſadly to be bewailed, that divines ſhould plead that ſame cauſe, that we daily find the devil pleading in the hearts of all natural men? and that inſtead of *caſting down*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. they ſhould be making defences for ſuch *ſtrong holds*, as muſt either be levelled with the duſt, or the rebel that holds them out, muſt eternally periſh?

It is no bad way of ſtudying the goſpel, and of attaining more light into it, that may be uſed in dealing particularly with the conſciences of all ſorts of men, as we have occaſion. More may be learned this way, than out of many large books. And if miniſters would deal more with their own conſciences, and the conſciences of others, in and about theſe points, that are moſt properly caſes of conſcience, we ſhould find an increaſe of goſpel-light, and a growing fitneſs to preach aright; as Paul did, 2 Cor. iv. 2. *By manifeſtation of the truth, commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

Let us keep up, in our hearts and doctrine, a reverend regard of the holy law of God, and ſuffer not a reflecting, diſparaging word or thought of it. The great ſalvation is contrived with a regard to it; and the ſatisfaction given to the law by the obedience and death of Chriſt our ſurety, hath made it glorious and honourable, more than all the holineſs of ſaints on earth, or of the glorified in heaven, and than all the torments of the damned in hell; though they do al-

ſo magnify the law, and make it honourable. But if men will teach, that the law, and obedience unto it, whether perfect or ſincere, is the righteouſneſs we muſt be found in, in our pleading for juſtification; they *neither underſtand what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm*, 1 Tim. i. 7. They *become debtors to it*, and *Chriſt profits them nothing*, Gal. ii. 21. and v. 2. 5. And we know what will become of that man, that hath his debts to the law to pay, and hath no intereſt in the ſurety's payment. Yet many ſuch offer their own ſilver, which, whatever coin of man be upon it, is reprobate, and rejected both by law and goſpel.

Let us carefully keep the bounds clear betwixt the law and goſpel; which "whoſoever doth, is a right "perfect divine," ſaith bleſſed Luther, in his commentary on the epiſtle to the Galatians: a book that hath more plain ſound goſpel, than many volumes of ſome other divines. Let us keep the law as far from the buſineſs of juſtification, as we would keep condemnation, its contrary. For the law and condemnation are inſeparable, but by the intervention of Jeſus Chriſt our ſurety, Gal. iii. 10.—14. But in the practice of holineſs, the fulfilled law given by Jeſus Chriſt to believers as a rule, is of great and good uſe to them; as hath been declared.

Laſtly, Be exact in your communion and church-adminiſtrations. If any walk otherwiſe than it becometh the goſpel, if any abuſe the doctrine of grace to licentiouſneſs; draw the rod of diſcipline againſt them the more ſeverely, that ye know ſo many wait for your halting, and are ready to ſpeak evil of the ways and truths of God.

The wiſdom of God ſometimes orders the different opinions of men about his truth, for the clearing and confirming of it; while each ſide watch the extremes that others may be in hazard of running into. And if controverſy be fairly and meekly managed this way, we may differ, and plead our opinions, and both

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love and edify them we oppoſe, and may be loved and edified by them in their oppoſition.

I know no fear poſſeſſeth our ſide, but that of Arminianiſm. Let us be fairly ſecured from that; and as we ever hated true Antinomianiſm, ſo we are ready to oppoſe it with all our might. But having ſuch grounds of jealouſy as I have named, (and it is well known that I have not named all), men will allow us to fear, that this noiſe of Antinomianiſm is raiſed, and any advantage they have by the raſhneſs and imprudence of ſome ignorant men, is improved to a ſevere height, by ſome, on purpoſe to ſhelter Arminianiſm in its growth, and to advance it further amongſt us; which we pray and hope the Lord will prevent.

Your's,

ROB. TRAILL.

POSTSCRIPT.

THIS paper preſented to thee, was in its firſt deſign intended as a private letter to a particular brother, as the title bears. How it comes to be publiſhed, I ſhall not trouble the world with an account of. I think, that Dr Owen's excellent book of *juſtification*, and Mr Marſhall's book of the *myſtery of ſanctification by faith in Jeſus Chriſt*, are ſuch vindications and confirmations of the Proteſtant doctrine, againſt which I fear no effectual oppoſition. Dr Owen's name is ſo ſavoury and famous, his ſoundneſs in the faith, and ability in learning for its defence, ſo juſtly reputed, that no ſober man will attempt him. Mr Marſhall was a holy retired perſon; and is only known to the moſt of us by his book publiſhed lately. The book is a deep, practical, well-jointed diſcourſe; and requires a more than ordinary attention in the reading of it with profit. And if it be ſingly uſed, I look upon it as one of the moſt uſeful books

the world hath ſeen for many years. Its excellency is, that it leads the ſerious reader directly to Jeſus Chriſt, and cuts the ſinews and overturns the foundation of the new divinity, by the ſame argument of goſpel-holineſs by which many attempt to overturn the old. And as it hath already the ſeal of high approbation by many judicious miniſters and Chriſtians that have read it; ſo I fear not but it will ſtand firm as a rock againſt all oppoſition, and will prove good ſeed, and food, and light and life, to many hereafter.

All my deſign in publiſhing this, is, plainly and briefly, to give ſome information to ordinary plain people, who either want time or judgment to peruſe large and learned tractates, about this point of juſtification, wherein every one is equally concerned.

The theme of juſtification hath ſuffered greatly by this, that many have employed their heads and pens, who never had their hearts and conſciences exerciſed about it. And they muſt be frigid and dreaming ſpeculations that all ſuch are taken up with, whoſe conſciences are not enlivened with their perſonal concern in it.

Theſe things are undoubted: 1: That as it is a point of higheſt concern to every man, ſo it is to the whole doctrine of Chriſtianity. All the great fundamentals of Chriſtian truth, center in this of juſtification. The Trinity of perſons in the God-head; the incarnation of the only begotten of the Father; the ſatisfaction paid to the law and juſtice of God, for the ſins of the world, by his obedience, and ſacrifice of himſelf in that fleſh he aſſumed; and the divine authority of the ſcriptures, which reveal all this, are all ſtraight lines of truth, that center in this doctrine of the juſtification of a ſinner by the imputation and application of that ſatisfaction. No juſtification without a righteouſneſs; no righteouſneſs can be, but what anſwers fully and perfectly the holy law of God; no ſuch righteouſneſs can be performed, but by a divine perſon; no benefit can accrue to a ſinner by it, unleſs

unleſs it be ſome way his, and applied to him; no application can be made of this, but by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. And as the connection with and dependence of this truth upon the other great myſteries of divine truth, is evident in the plain propoſal of it; ſo the ſame hath ſadly been manifeſt in this, that the forſaking of the doctrine of juſtification by faith in Chriſt's righteouſneſs, hath been the firſt ſtep of apoſtaſy in many, who have not ſtopped till they revolted from Chriſtianity itſelf. Hence ſo many Arminians, and their chief leaders too, turned Socinians. From denying juſtification by Chriſt's righteouſneſs, they proceeded to the denying of his ſatisfaction; from the denial of his proper ſatisfaction, they went on to the denying of the divinity of his perſon. And that man's charity is exceſſive that will allow to ſuch blaſphemers of the Son of God, the name of *Chriſtians*. Let not then the zeal of any ſo fundamental a point of truth, as that is of the juſtification of a ſinner by faith in Chriſt, be charged with folly. It is good to be always zealouſly affected in a good thing: and this is the beſt of things.

2. It is undoubted that there is a myſtery in this matter of juſtification. As it is God's act, it is an act of free grace and deep wiſdom. Herein juſtice and mercy kiſs one another in ſaving the ſinner. Here appears God-man, with the righteouſneſs of God, and this applied and imputed to ſinful men. Here man's ſin and miſery, are the field in which the riches of God's grace in Chriſt are diſplayed. Here the ſinner is made righteous by the righteouſneſs of another, and obtains juſtification through this righteouſneſs, though he pays and gives nothing for it. God declares him righteous, or juſtifies him freely; and yet he is well paid for it by the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. It is an act of juſtice and mercy both, when God juſtifies a believer on Jeſus Chriſt. And muſt there not then be a great myſtery in it? is not every believer daily admiring the

the depth of this way of God; This myſtery is, uſually, rather darkened, than illuſtrated, by logical terms uſed in the handling of it. The only defence that good and learned men have for the uſe of them, is (and it hath great weight), that the craft of adverſaries doth conſtrain them to uſe ſuch terms, to find them out, or hedge them in. It is certain, that this myſtery is as plainly revealed in the word, as the Holy Ghoſt thought fit to do in teaching the heirs of this grace; and it were well if men did contain themſelves within theſe bounds.

3. It is certain, that this doctrine of juſtification propoſed in the word, hath been very differently underſtood and expreſſed by men, that profeſs that God's word is the only rule of their thoughts and words about the things of the Spirit of God. It hath been, and will ſtill be a ſtone of ſtumbling; as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf was, and is, Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

4. That whatever variety and differences there be in mens notions and opinions (and there is a great deal) about juſtification, they are all certainly reducible to two; one of which is every man's opinion. And they are, That the juſtification of a ſinner before God, is either on the account of a righteouſneſs in and of ourſelves; or on the account of a righteouſneſs in another, even Jeſus Chriſt, who is *Jehovah our righteouſneſs*. Law and goſpel, faith and works, Chriſt's righteouſneſs and our own, grace and debt, do equally divide all in this matter. Crafty men may endeavour to blend and mix theſe things together in juſtification; but it is a vain attempt. It is not only moſt expreſly rejected in the goſpel, which peremptorily determines the contrariety, inconſiſtency, and incompatibility betwixt theſe two; but the nature of the things in themſelves, and the ſenſe and conſcience of every ſerious perſon, do witneſs to the ſame, that our own righteouſneſs, and Chriſt's righteouſneſs, do comprehend all the pleas of men to juſtification (one

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or other of them every man in the world ſtands upon); and that they are inconſiſtent with, and deſtructive one of another, in juſtification. If a man truſts to his own righteouſneſs, he rejects Chriſt's; if he truſts to Chriſt's righteouſneſs, he rejects his own. If he will not reject his own righteouſneſs, as too good to be renounced; if he will not venture on Chriſt's righteouſneſs, as not ſufficient alone to bear him out, and bring him ſafe off at God's bar, he is in both a convicted unbeliever. And if he endeavour to patch up a righteouſneſs before God, made up of both, he is ſtill under the law, and a deſpiſer of goſpel-grace, Gal. ii. 21. That righteouſneſs that juſtifies a ſinner, conſiſts *in aliquo indiviſibli:* and this every man finds when the caſe is his own, and he ſerious about it.

5. Theſe different ſentiments about juſtification, have been at all times managed with a ſpecial acrimony. They that are for the righteouſneſs of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt, look upon it as the only foundation of all their hopes for eternity, and therefore cannot but be zealous for it. And the contrary ſide are as hot for their own righteouſneſs, the moſt admired and adored Diana of proud mankind, as if it were an image falſen down from Jupiter; when it is indeed the idol that was caſt out of heaven with the devil, and which he hath ever ſince been ſo diligent to ſet up before ſinful men to be worſhipped, that he might bring them into the ſame condemnation with himſelf: for by true ſin, and falſe righteouſneſs, he hath *deceived the whole world*, Rev. xii. 9.

6. As the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaking in the ſcriptures, is the ſupreme and infallible judge and determiner of all truth; ſo where he doth particularly, and on purpoſe, deliver any truth, there we are ſpecially to attend and learn. And tho', in moſt points of truth, he uſually teacheth us by a bare authoritative narration; yet in ſome points, which his infinite wiſdom foreſaw ſpecial oppoſition to, he doth not only declare, but debate and determine the truth. And the inſtances are two eſpecially.

cially. One is about the divinity of Chriſt's perſon, and dignity of his prieſthood; reaſoned, argued, and determined, in the epiſtle to the Hebrews. The other is about juſtification by faith; exactly handled in the epiſtles to the Romans, and to the Galatians. In the former of theſe two, the doctrine of free juſtification is taught us moſt formally and accurately. And tho' we find no charge againſt that church, in Paul's time, or in his epiſtle for their departing from the truth in this point; yet the wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt is remarkable in this, that this doctrine ſhould be ſo plainly aſſerted, and ſtrongly proved in an epiſtle to that church, the pretended ſucceſſors whereof have apoſtatized from that faith, and proved the main aſſerters of that damnable error, of juſtification by works. That to the Galatians is plainly written, to cure a begun, and obviate a full apoſtaſy, from the purity of the goſpel, in the point of juſtification by faith, without the works of the law. And from theſe two epiſtles, if we be wiſe, we muſt learn the truth of this doctrine, and expound all other ſcriptures, in a harmony with what is there ſo ſetly determined, as *in foro contradictorio*.

7. *Laſtly*, It is not to be denied, or concealed, that on each ſide, ſome have run into extremes, which the generality do not own, but are uſually loaded with. The Papiſts run high for juſtification by works; yet even ſome of them, in the council of Trent, diſcourſed very favourably of juſtification by faith. The Arminians have qualified a little the groſſneſs of the Popiſh doctrine in this article: and ſome ſince have eſſayed to qualify that of the Arminians, and to plead the ſame cauſe more finely. Again, ſome have run into the other extreme, as appeared in Germany a little after the reformation: and ſome ſuch there hath been always, and in all places, where the goſpel hath ſhined; and theſe were called *Antinomians*. But how unjuſtly this hateful name is charged upon the orthodox preachers and ſincere believers of the Proteſtant doc-

doctrine of juſtification by faith only, who keep the goſpel-midſt betwixt theſe two rocks, is the deſign of this paper to diſcover. What we plead for, is in ſum, That Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour is *the fountain opened in the houſe of David, for ſin and for uncleanneſs*, wherein only men can be waſhed, in juſtification and ſanctification; and that there is no other fountain of man's deviſing, nor of God's declaring, for waſhing a ſinner firſt, ſo as to make him fit and meet to come to this, to waſh, and to be clean.

As for inherent holineſs, is it not ſufficiently ſecured by the Spirit of Chriſt received by faith, the certain ſpring and cauſe of it; by the word of God, the plain and perfect rule of it; by the declared neceſſity of it to all them that look to be ſaved, and to juſtify the ſincerity of a man's faith; unleſs we bring it in to juſtification, and thereby make our own pitiful holineſs ſit on the throne of judgment, with the precious blood of the Lamb of God?

Though I expect that a more able hand will undertake an examination of the new divinity; yet, to fill up a little room, I would ſpeak ſomewhat to their Achillean argument, that is ſo much boaſted of, and ſo frequently inſiſted on by them, as their ſhield and ſpear. Their argument is this: That Chriſt's righteouſneſs is our legal righteouſneſs; but our own is our evangelical righteouſneſs: that is, When a ſinner is charged with ſin againſt the holy law of God, he may oppoſe Chriſt's righteouſneſs as his legal defence; but againſt the charge of the goſpel, eſpecially for unbelief, he muſt produce his faith, as his defence or righteouſneſs, againſt that charge.

With a great deference to ſuch worthy divines as have looked on this as an argument of weight, I ſhall, in a few words, eſſay to manifeſt, that this is either a ſaying the ſame in other odd words, that is commonly taught by us; or a ſophiſm; or a departing from the Proteſtant doctrine about juſtification.

1. This argument concerns not at all the juſtification of a ſinner before God. For this end, no more is needful, than to conſider, what this charge is, againſt whom it is given, and by whom. The charge is ſaid to be given in by God; and a charge of unbelief or diſobeying the goſpel. But againſt whom? Is it againſt a believer or unbeliever? and theſe two divide all mankind. If it be againſt a believer, it is a falſe charge, and can never be given in by the God of truth. For the believer is juſtified already by faith and as to this charge he is innocent. And innocence is defence enough to a man falſely charged, before a righteous judge. Is this charge given in againſt an unbeliever? We allow it is a righteous charge. Ay, but ſay they, "will Chriſt's righteouſneſs juſtify a "man from this chatge of goſpel unbelief?" The anſwer is plain. No, it will not; nor yet from any other charge whatſoever, either from law or goſpel; for he hath nothing to do with Chriſt's righteouſneſs while an unbeliever. *What then doth this arguing reprove?* Is it, that no man's faith in Chriſt's righteouſneſs can be juſtified in its ſincerity before men, and in a man's own conſcience, but in and by the fruits of a true lively faith? In this they have no oppoſers that I know of. Or is it, that a man may have Chriſt's righteouſneſs for his legal righteouſneſs, and yet be a rebel to the goſpel, and a ſtranger to true holineſs? Who ever affirmed it? Or is it, that this goſpel-holineſs is that that a man muſt not only have, (for that we grant), but alſo may venture to ſtand in, and to be found in before God, and to venture into judgment with God upon, in his claim to eternal life? Then we muſt oppoſe them that think ſo, as we know their own conſciences will when in any livily exerciſe. Theſe plain principles of goſpel-truth, while they remain, (and remain they will on their own foundation, when we are all in our graves, and our fooliſh contentions are buried), do overthrow this pretended charge. 1. That Chriſt's righteouſneſs is the only plea.

plea and anſwer of a ſinner arraigned at God's bar for life and death. 2. This righteouſneſs is imputed to no man but a believer. 5. When it is imputed by grace, and applied by faith, it immediately and eternally becomes the man's righteouſneſs, before God, angels, men, and devils, Rom. viii. 33, 35, 38, 39. It is a righteouſneſs that is never loſt, never taken away, never ineffectual; anſwereth all charges, and is attended with all graces.

2. I would aſk, What is that righteouſneſs that juſtifies a man from the ſin of unbelief? We have rejected the imaginary charge; let us now conſider the real ſin. Unbelief is the greateſt ſin againſt both law and goſpel; more remotely againſt the law, which binds all men to believe God ſpeaking, ſay what he will; more directly againſt the goſpel, which tells us what we ſhould believe, and commands us to believe. Let us put this caſe, (and it is pity the caſe is ſo rare when the ſin is ſo common), that a poor ſoul is troubled about the greatneſs of the ſin of unbelief, in *calling God a lyar*, 1 John v. 10. in diſtruſting his faithful promiſe, in doubting Chriſt's ability and goodwill to ſave, in ſtanding aloof ſo long from Jeſus Chriſt; as many of the elect are long in a ſtate of unbelief till called; and the beſt of believers have unbelief in ſome meaſure in them, Mark ix. 24. Abraham's faith ſtaggered ſometimes, Gen. xii. and xx. What ſhall we ſay to a conſcience thus troubled? Will any man dare to tell him, that Chriſt's righteouſneſs is his legal righteouſneſs againſt the charge of ſins againſt the law; but for goſpel-charges, he muſt anſwer them in his own name? I know our hotteſt oppoſers would abhor ſuch an anſwer; and would freely tell ſuch a man, that *the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth from all ſin;* and that his juſtification from his unbelief muſt be only in that righteouſneſs which he ſo ſinfully had rejected while in unbelief, and now lays hold on by faith.

3. But ſome extend this argument yet more dange-

rouſly: for they ſay, That not only men muſt have their faith for their righteouſneſs againſt the charge of unbelief, but repentance againſt the charge of impenitence, ſincerity againſt that of hypocriſy, holineſs againſt that of unholineſs, and perſeverence as their goſpel-righteouſneſs, againſt the charge of apoſtacy. If they mean only, that theſe things are juſtifications and fruits of true faith, and of the ſincerity of the grace of God in us; we do agree to the meaning: but highly diſlike the expreſſions, as unſcriptural and dangerous, tending to the diſhonouring of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and to run men on the rocks of pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs, that natural corruption drives all men upon. But if they mean, that, either jointly or ſeparately, they are our righteouſneſs before God; or that, either ſeparate from, or mixed with Chriſt's righteouſneſs, they may be made our claim and plea for ſalvation; I muſt ſay, that it is dangerous doctrine; and its native tendency is, to turn Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs out of the church to deſtroy all the ſolid peace of believers, and to exclude goſpel-juſtification out of this world, and reſerve it to another, and that with a horrible uncertainty of any particular man's partaking of it. But theſe bleſſed truths of God, and bleſſings of believers, ſtand on firmer foundations than heaven or earth, and will continue fixed againſt all the attempts of the gates of hell. Bleſſed be the rock, Chriſt, on which all is built; bleſſed be the new covenant, *ordered in all things and ſure; and bleſſed is he that believeth: for there ſhall be a performance of thoſe things which are told him from the Lord*, Luke i. 45. Amen.

LONDON,
Sept. 1ſt, 1692.

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END OF VOLUME FIRST.